

JEFFERSON JOURNAL

July/August 2022



The Science Of Sleep:

Pacific Northwest
Researchers Explore Secrets
Of A Good Night's Rest



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FEATURED

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By Jes Burns

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By Juliet Grable

If you've visited Ashland lately, you may have been struck by how normal it all feels. Tourists stroll down Main Street, most of them maskless. Diners throng the outdoor seating along Calle Guanajuato, the pedestrian way along Ashland Creek. Lithia Park is lush from recent rains. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival is in full swing. You can almost forget we're just emerging from more than two years of a pandemic and that we're still in the throes of a record drought.

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—Eric Asimov The New York Times



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The Journalism Values We Live By

Long ago, as a college student studying media relations, I learned that no self-respecting communication professional would answer “no comment” to a reporter asking a question about virtually anything. Saying “no comment” to a reporter is the journalism equivalent of pleading the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination. It’s not a good look, and it rarely stops a conversation, instead motivating reporters to dig in further to discover and reveal whatever it is someone is trying not to discuss.

Reporters frequently contact people who would rather not talk to them. And, during the days of the pandemic when so little human-to-human contact has been taking place, it’s become even easier to simply ignore requests from reporters for interviews on topics people would rather duck. When this happens, reporters and their editors must decide how to proceed with a story that lacks a viewpoint or perspective from a source that they believe is important to the balanced treatment or full understanding of an issue.

Most often, a reporter will move forward with a story and convey to the public that they have reached out to an individual or organization and that did not respond to, or declined, a request for an interview related to one of our stories. The JPR newsroom takes this approach only as a last resort after providing ample time for a response to an interview request. It’s the only reasonable course of action, since deciding not to cover an issue for lack of a response by a single source would incentivize subjects of news stories to ignore reporters as a way to squelch potentially unfavorable news coverage and avoid public scrutiny.

Sometimes, after we run a story about an issue that lacks a response from a key source because they declined, or didn’t respond to, an interview request, they complain that our story was unfair. When this occurs, we do our best to update the online version of our story by adding a response from an involved source using an “Editor’s Note” without changing our original reporting. We scrutinize these statements carefully and link primary documents whenever possible since these prepared statements fall outside our reporting process which includes checking facts, questioning claims and providing context.

JPR does not engage in “gotcha journalism,” a term media critics use to describe interviewing methods designed to entrap interviewees into making statements that are damaging or discredit their cause or character. Our aim is to find the strongest and most knowledgeable spokespeople on every side of every

issue we cover, especially complex or controversial ones, and present fact-based perspectives for our audience so that our listeners can develop their own viewpoints, or decide to pursue further research on a particular issue. That doesn’t mean we don’t ask direct questions that an interviewee might not like or feels are confrontational. It does mean that our intent is always to find verifiable facts, and report them and to provide a fair venue for discussion of controversial issues.

The business of journalism is not a simple one. Many stories require analysis by reporters and editors before they are broadcast or published. And, while the circumstances of every story are usually quite distinct, all are guided by a common set of ethics, standards and principles. JPR adheres to several established codes of conduct, including the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics and the Public Media Code of Integrity.

The Preamble of the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics states: “Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough ...” It further declares that four principles stand as “the foundation of ethical journalism.” These four principles are: “Seek Truth and Report It”; “Minimize Harm”; “Act Independently”; and “Be Accountable and Transparent.” This credo is prominently displayed on the wall of the JPR newsroom.

In an age when a record number of news consumers distrust the media, it’s more important than ever for journalists and news organizations to pull back the curtain on the decisions we make in the course of doing our work and the values we live by. I believe increasing the transparency of journalism from within our profession is an essential step toward gaining the trust of citizens.



Paul Westhelle is
JPR's Executive Director.



The Science Of Sleep:

Pacific Northwest Researchers Explore
Secrets Of A Good Night's Rest

By Jes Burns





BRANDON SWANSON / OPB

WISP will be used in conjunction with a new method of measuring glymphatic system activity with magnetic resonance imaging.

Early prototypes of any technology can be a little persnickety. Just ask Sofia Fluke, a test engineer at the Brain Electrophysiology Lab in Eugene.

She sits hunched over her desk with a small, orange flathead screwdriver, trying to replace the lid on an electronics casing about the size of a deck of cards.

The screw wobbles as she turns it.

“It easily falls out if you’re not very, very slow,” she says. “It’s a very delicate process because we just made all of this ourselves.”

The electronics casing houses the brains of a new device called the WISP – or the Wireless Interface Sensor Pod.

Its DIY origins are rather obvious. The casing attaches to what looks like a headlamp strap. Wired electrodes dangle off the sides and others are housed in a zip-up pouch on the front.

Despite the inelegance of this early design, the technology itself is anything but.

The WISP has the potential to change the way we think about sleep.

The WISP has the potential to change the way we think about sleep.

The yawning hole of sleepless nights

The WISP is a headband designed to be worn while sleeping. It harnesses brainwaves to give you a better night's rest.

One in five people in the United States suffers from chronic sleep problems, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And for a lot of them – including new parents, night shift workers, soldiers, and nearly everyone as they get older – the WISP may eventually provide relief from sleep deprivation and disrupted sleep.

“We used to think that the need to sleep was something we could minimize or conquer. But really over the past couple of decades, we’ve started to understand just how important it is,” said Oregon Health and Science University neurologist Miranda Lim.

And it’s not just how long we sleep. Quality matters.

“Pharmaceutical companies for decades have been seeking this ‘magic pill’ or ‘Holy Grail.’ They have medications out there that do increase total sleep duration, but many of them have side effects,” she said. “Those don’t address the quality of sleep.”

The goal of Lim and the team at BEL is to use WISP to influence a sleep stage known as “deep sleep” or slow-wave sleep.

“Sleep scientists, for many years now, have thought that the most restorative phase of sleep is slow-wave sleep, the sleep that you see usually in the first half of the night as soon as your head hits the pillow,” Lim said.

Brainwaves are normally chaotic. Neurons fire in different parts of your brain as you talk, move, dream and solve problems. It’s a purposeful cacophony. But during deep sleep, your brain waves slow down and synchronize, throbbing in slow oscillations.

The WISP detects when your brain is just starting to enter deep sleep.

“[WISP users] have a little nanocomputer at their bedside that helps to detect the brainwaves. And there we use machine learning so that we can recognize the brainwaves and tell which stage the sleep they’re in,” said BEL founder Don Tucker, a retired University of Oregon professor.

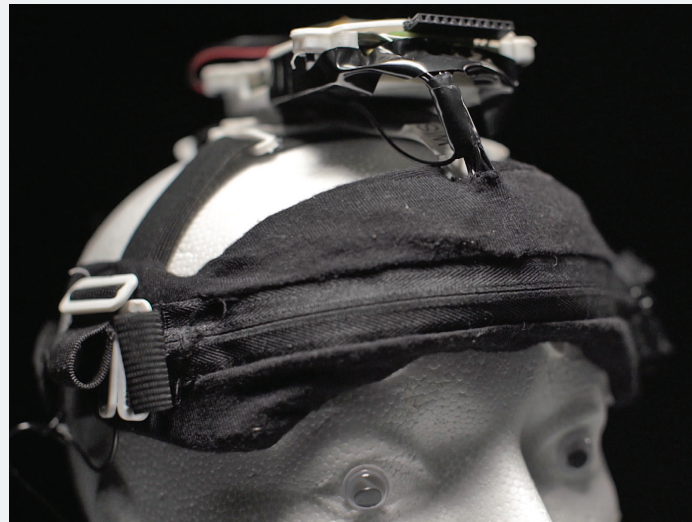
And this is where it gets weird.

The WISP then delivers a light electrical stimulus to different spots on the head.

“At that exact moment it sees [the slow waves starting], the device will hook onto those and stimulate the brain to make those larger and last longer,” Lim said.

It only takes a few minutes of WISP stimulation and synchronization.

“The interesting thing was that once we do that, the brain’s slow oscillations continue throughout the night. It’s like we jumpstart the natural rhythms and keep them going,” Tucker said.



BRANDON SWANSON / OPB

Recent discoveries in neuroscience are linking the lack of sleep with much more serious memory disorders like Alzheimer’s and other types of dementia.

Finding the right paradigm

The BEL team didn’t discover this quirk of neurobiology, but they have been able to isolate and target where these slow waves originate.

They’ve tested WISP on a few people in Oregon so far, and the results are promising.

So much so, that it caught the attention of the U.S. military, which recently linked sleep deprivation in soldiers to accidents, traumatic brain injury, PTSD and suicide.

The military is now funding a second round of clinical trials, contributing \$4.3 million split between the WISP and other research connected to the project.

In preparation, BEL engineers are busy developing a new prototype that’ll be a little more sleek, stylish and comfortable.

It could be life-changing if the WISP delivers and gives sleep-deprived people a better night’s rest, but the work is still in the early stages.

“The concept is that you facilitate what is already there,” said Lisa Marshall, a neuroscientist at the University of Lübeck



BRANDON SWANSON / OPB

OHSU neurologist Miranda Lim (right) consults with engineer Sofia Fluke at BEL in Eugene.

PREVIOUS PAGE: This early prototype of the WISP showed great promise in initial human tests. The device is designed to improve the quality of sleep — specifically deep sleep.

in Germany, who did early research on this phenomenon, but is not associated with the BEL project. “If [the stimulus is] individualized enough in topography and timing and all that, it could have a very good potential.”

The extent of that potential will be revealed during the human trials, which are slated to enroll a total of 90 people this summer at the University of Washington and the University of North Carolina. And even then, more refinement will likely be required.

“[You] might have to find the right kind of paradigm. Maybe you use it for three days and then you stop and then you start again. There might be some kind of optimum,” Marshall said. “There is usually adaptation of the body to whatever external influence there is. And some parameters will probably have to be changed.”

This unremembered state

If effective, it’ll likely be years before the WISP is broadly available, though BEL does hope to market the device as a sleep

aid. But this story of Pacific Northwest innovation is about much more than feeling more rested and alert in the morning.

“We think improving deep sleep is important for everybody who’s over 30 and not getting any younger,” Tucker said.

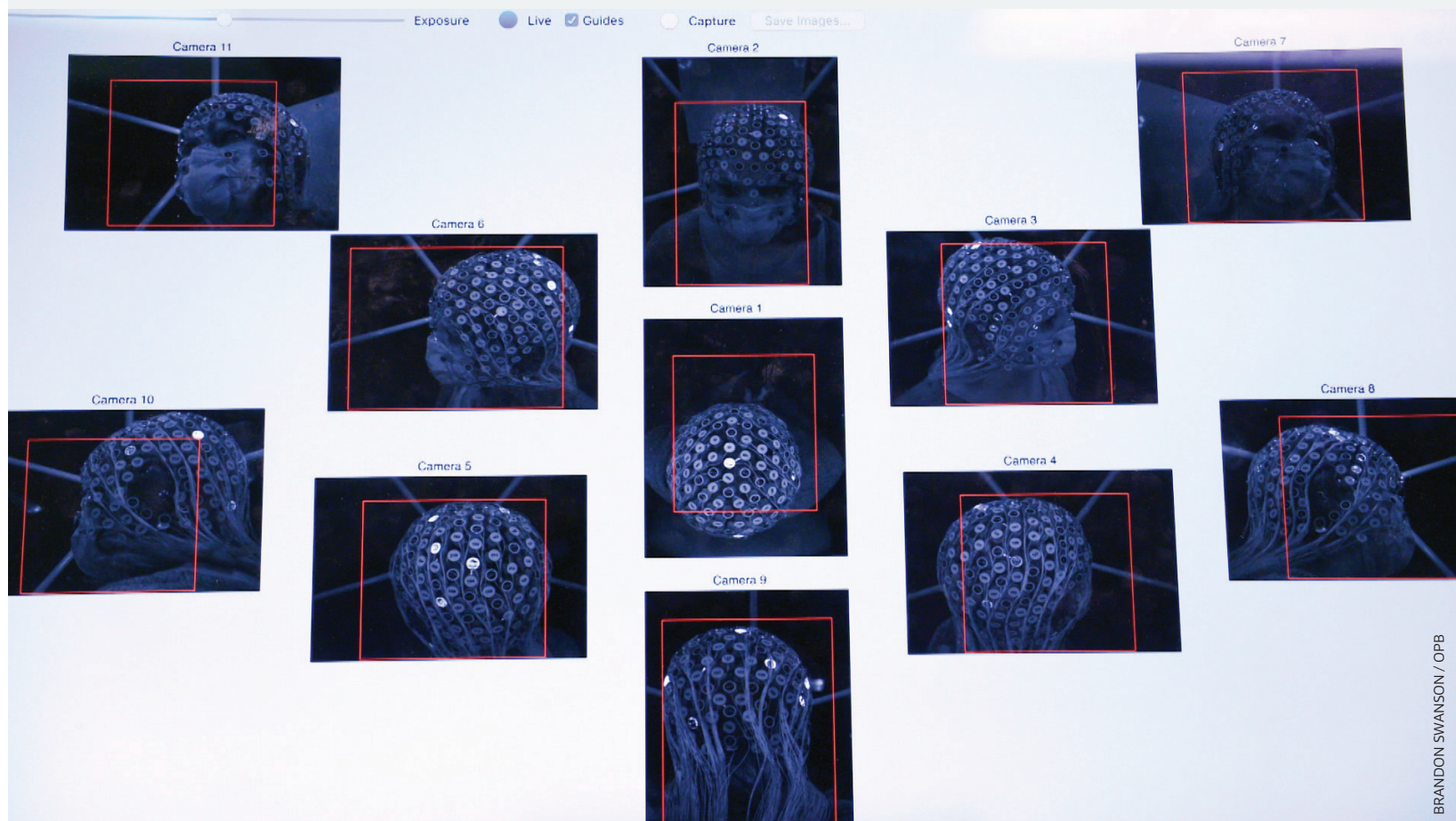
That’s because of the connection between deep sleep and how humans create, organize and store different types of memories.

“As you get older, as I can verify, your memory is not as good for all the incidental things that happen during the day. And there’s very good evidence that part of that’s because you’re losing the capacity for deep sleep,” he said. “We think that sleep is one of the ways to improve the brain function of an aging population.”

Tucker is not just talking about memories like where we left our keys or that secret ingredient in grandma’s pot pie.

Recent discoveries in neuroscience are linking the lack of sleep with much more serious memory disorders like Alzheimer’s and other types of dementia.

The discoveries involve a part of the brain we didn’t really know existed until about a decade ago. It’s called the gly-



phatic system, which can be thought of as a type of circulatory system in the brain. Instead of blood, the glymphatic system circulates cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).

Jeffrey Iliff is a collaborator on the larger project that includes WISP testing. He studies neurodegeneration at the VA Puget Sound and the University of Washington and was part of the team that first identified the glymphatic pathways in 2012.

“The glymphatic system was described as the brain’s way of washing away wastes during the night that accumulate through the course of the day,” he said.

These proteins and other metabolic wastes are a byproduct of normal brain function. This taking-out-the-trash work done by the glymphatic system is a phenomenon Iliff calls “brain-washing.” It happens most efficiently during deep, slow-wave sleep.

When this brainwashing is stymied – possibly through lack of deep sleep – Iliff said the waste isn’t cleared as effectively. And it’s believed that build-ups of some of these by-products play a starring role in the development of Alzheimer’s disease.

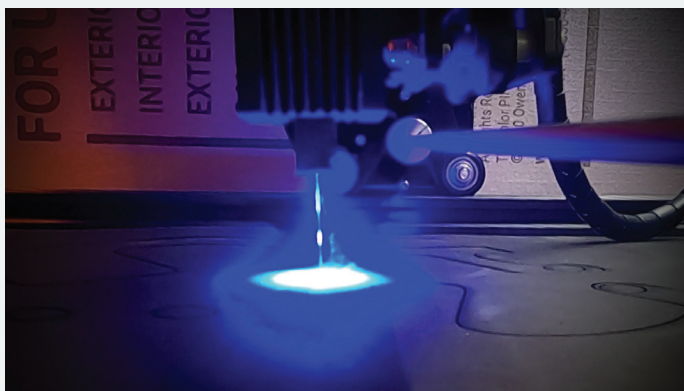
Measure for measure

This science is so new that most of what we know about the glymphatic system comes from what researchers have observed in mice.

“The glymphatic system right now is an enigma. We know it exists in mice. We think it exists in people and we have some proof, but we really don’t know what it looks like. We don’t know how it functions,” said Swati Rane Levendovszky, director of the University of Washington’s Diagnostic Imaging Sciences Center.

It’s still impossible to draw clear lines that connect sleep, glymphatics and dementia.

“We don’t yet have the smoking gun that says, ‘Yes, the impairment of this process is contributing to Alzheimer’s disease in human populations.’ The reason why we don’t have that smoking gun is because we haven’t had a good way to measure this function in human populations in a reasonable way,” Iliff said.



BRANDON SWANSON / OPB

BEL's WISP headset will be tested in new human trials in summer 2022 at the University of Washington. Before those get underway, BEL engineers are creating a new prototype out of laser-cut foam designed for fit, comfort, electrode placement, and a little bit of style.

In science, if you can't measure something, you can't truly understand it.

This is where Rane Levendovszky's MRI imaging work connected to the WISP trials looms large.

"MRI is my window into their brain," she explained.

At the University of Washington Medical Center, Rane Levendovszky is developing non-invasive ways to measure the flow of the glymphatic system in humans after a good and bad night's sleep.

"We know that the glymphatic system has many different components. The CSF washing is occurring along the (outside of the) brain. It is occurring along the blood vessels in the brain. And then there's a component where fluid is moving within the tissue of the brain and then it drains out. So we are trying to see if we can target each of these components using different MRI methods," she said.

The WISP trials are the perfect opportunity for this because the slow, synchronized waves of deep sleep are when the glymphatic system takes out the most trash.

"We are trying ... to see the system from many different angles, hoping to catch some part of it. And then put the pieces of the puzzle together and have a picture of glymphatics and how it works," she said.

If the team's hypothesis holds, disrupting sleep will disrupt the glymphatic system, and improving deep sleep will make it work even better. Ideally, Rane Levendovszky's new MRI techniques will be able to measure glymphatic flow in both cases.



BRANDON SWANSON / OPB

The WISP monitors brainwaves during sleep in order to know when to apply light electrical stimulus to the head.

The techniques could throw open the proverbial shutters on glymphatic science.

"They have implications that go way beyond this study... out into Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's and headaches and concussions and all sorts of other conditions," Iliff said.

Rane Levendovszky said she sees the potential for a clinical application as well. She envisions a time when people over 65 get a routine MRI to gauge how well their glymphatic system is working.

"That could be an indication that okay, you're at risk of Alzheimer's," she said. "So you can help at first, maybe slow down the progression of the disease. And maybe at some point, develop technology or therapy that can just prevent it ... at a later stage."

And if getting better deep sleep can help prevent the disease, that technology might end up looking something like Don Tucker's WISP headband, improving our sleep tonight and into the future.

"One of the questions is: Can we keep this up for weeks and months and really change somebody's brain aging process? Can we make younger brains by helping to synchronize them in the deep sleep?" he asked.

And maybe if we sleep better, we'll age better too.



Jes Burns is a reporter for OPB's Science & Environment unit. Jes has a degree in English literature from Duke University and a master's degree from the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communications.

To view the entertaining and informative video that accompanies this article, visit <https://www.opb.org/article/2022/06/01/the-science-of-sleep-pacific-northwestresearchers-explore-secrets-of-a-good-nights-rest/> ... you won't regret it.

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“The smoke, the Almeda Fire, and Covid cast a bright light on the need to make sure we’re working toward diversification in our visitor economy.”

—Hiram Towle, General Manager – Mt. Ashland Ski Area

With outdoor seating, a wide beer list and ample parking for mountain bikers, Gil's tap house stayed busy during the pandemic.

JULIET GRABLE / JPR

Battered By The Pandemic, Ashland Reimagines Its Tourism Economy

By Juliet Grable

If you’ve visited Ashland lately, you may have been struck by how normal it all feels. Tourists stroll down Main Street, most of them maskless. Diners throng the outdoor seating along Calle Guanajuato, the pedestrian way along Ashland Creek. Lithia Park is lush from recent rains. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival is in full swing. You can almost forget we’re just emerging from more than two years of a pandemic and that we’re still in the throes of a record drought.

Make no mistake: the pandemic hit Ashland hard. It came on the heels of two smoky summers, during which several performances of the festival, Ashland’s anchor attraction, were canceled. OSF went dark for all of 2020 and most of 2021.

“Pre-pandemic, we had people who had been coming to Ashland for 20-plus years,” says Drew Gibbs, owner of the Winchester Inn and two Ashland restaurants, Alchemy and Chateaubriand 36. “They were people who wanted to book the same weekend every year. They didn’t care what was playing at OSF; they’d be there.”

While festival patrons, many of them older, wealthy retirees, stayed away, others came, once the first wave of the pandemic receded. When Gibbs talked to his customers, he learned they were there to go mountain biking or on wine tours, or were simply passing through on their way to somewhere else.

Katharine Cato, director at Travel Ashland, says the Southern Oregon town’s visitor base was evolving well before Covid. “We’ve seen it coming, with poor air quality, an aging OSF audience, changing loyalties, and a new type of visitor coming to Ashland,” she says. “The pandemic simply broke everything open.”

Survey says

Ashland’s economy is grounded in tourism. Historically, says Cato, OSF has been responsible for about 120,000 unique visitors per year—over one third of Ashland’s annual tourist traffic.

Travel Ashland is responsible for promoting Ashland as a tourist destination and ultimately, helping fuel the town’s

economy. Every year they track trends and plan accordingly. In November of 2020, nearly a year into the pandemic, Travel Ashland hired Destination Analysts, a firm based in San Francisco, to conduct a visitor research and analyses study to better understand the new tourists coming to Ashland.

Surveys of 1500 “leisure travelers” from key markets across the region helped them learn why people traveled and how their impressions of Ashland compared to other destinations in the region. The surveys showed that visitors could be lured to Ashland for its small, walkable downtown, proximity to rivers and lakes, and award-winning cuisine and culinary festivals. Uncrowded trails and cultural attractions are also draws.

At the same time, respondents viewed Ashland primarily as an outstanding arts and culture destination. They ranked Healdsburg, Lake Tahoe, and Bend more highly when it comes to wine, food, and outdoor recreation. Now, Travel Ashland is trying to change that perception.

For Hiram Towle, general manager at Mt. Ashland Ski Area who also serves on the Travel Ashland Advisory Committee, the study confirmed what he already knew.

“The smoke, the Almeda Fire, and Covid cast a bright light on the need to make sure we’re working toward diversification in our visitor economy,” he says. “We’ve always known we had great recreation opportunities, but we didn’t crow about them. We were satisfied with filling restaurants and hotels with OSF patrons.”

A fresh look

When you visit Travel Ashland’s Instagram page, you’ll find eye candy: dancers in colorful costumes for the Ashland World Music Festival; a panorama of the vineyards at Belle Fiore winery; the cascades at Mill Creek Falls.

The social media page is just one aspect of a rebranding campaign Travel Ashland launched in response to the visitor study. A Bend-based firm called Intently Collaborative spearheaded the effort.



JULIET GRABLE / JPR

A free "Green Show" performance outside of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Allen Elizabethan Theater. During the 2022 season OSF is offering eight live performances, three virtual shows and reduced ticket pricing in what a spokesperson described as an effort to increase accessibility.

The new brand strives to portray Ashland as a modern mountain community with a broad array of amenities and easy access to nature and outdoor recreation. New colors—teal, blue, and a sunny gold—infuse Travel Ashland's revamped website and the latest visitor's guide. The Shakespearian tagline—*Ashland: As you like it*—has been updated with the more active *Ashland: Live your daydreams*.

The intent is not to replace OSF and play-going, Cato explains, but to elevate the other types of experiences Southern Oregon offers: food and wine tasting; an afternoon at the spa; skiing on Mt. Ashland.

Here, she argues, Ashland has advantages, even if people haven't discovered them yet.

For example, people flocked to ski slopes during the pandemic, seeking Covid-safe recreation, but at larger, better known resorts, the experience was marred by traffic and long lift lines.

"People were seeing that in the news, and that was driving them to go to places where there is still capacity," says Towle, adding that Mt. Ashland saw record visitorship last year, despite the less than stellar snow.

For similar reasons, the Rogue Valley's uncrowded tasting rooms have an advantage over better known wine regions, says Gibbs.

"Napa is like the Disneyland of the wine world," says Gibbs. "Here you can show up and the winemaker might be standing right there and offer to show you around." The combination of quality and casual is appealing to a lot of people, he adds, citing his newest restaurant, Chateaubriand 36, as the type of place that satisfies foodies but without the stuffy vibe.

Travel Ashland wants to shed the perception that Ashland is too expensive, or elitist. An important goal of the rebranding effort, says Cato, is sending a clear message that all are welcome—and that you can visit Ashland without breaking the bank.

In their rebranding campaign, Contently Co. identified four



JULIET GRABLE / JPR

Standing Stone Brewery closed in Ashland after 26 years. Managers cited reduced tourist traffic during the pandemic, smoky summers and the difficult job market.

Ashland's retail stores and restaurants are still trying to recover from the festival's closure and stop-start jolts of the pandemic.

"lifestyle personas" they hope to target through marketing: families looking for a stress-free vacation with kid-friendly activities; friends meeting up in Ashland, travelers seeking a quick getaway; and wanderers on the hunt for a scenic home base from which to explore Rogue Valley wineries.

Towle has been talking with other outdoor recreation business owners about how to better support visitors who come to ski, raft, bike, and fish. They note a need for better signage and more camping options in or close to town, including places where people can safely sleep in their vans or campers.

Right now, and unlike other ski resorts, the parking lot at Mt. Ashland isn't set up to accommodate campers, though people do spend the night there, says Towle.

When you start looking, you can already see evidence of a shift, both among Ashland's lodging options and restaurants.

The number of bed and breakfast inns has plummeted from over 30 to just 10. While some owners have simply retired, others have converted their inns to self-service vacation rentals, which not only feel safer during a pandemic, but cater to younger, tech-savvy travelers.

"You've got [restaurants] like Ruby's and Growler Guys and Skout that really do appeal to the outdoor traveler," says Towle. Even simple things like having a safe place to put your bicycle matter, he adds.



LANESSA PIERCE / WHAT TO DO IN SOUTHERN OREGON

Southeast of Ashland, Hobart Bluff is one of the Rogue Valley's most popular hikes.

A one-two punch

A healthy OSF is vital to Ashland's economy. The festival claims its state economic impact was over \$120 million in 2019, the year before the pandemic. Blake Zidell, OSF's press representative, told me OSF is responsible for a full 20 percent of overall economic activity in the Rogue Valley.

In 2018, OSF canceled or moved 26 performances and lost nearly \$2 million because of wildfire smoke.

On May 8, 2020, amid statewide pandemic restrictions, OSF canceled the rest of its 2020 season.

OSF reopened with a limited season in 2021, but in August, most of the performances of the festival's only running show were canceled because of smoke.

OSF has received \$14.71 million in pandemic relief funds, including \$10 million through the federal Shuttered Venue Operators grant program.



JULIET GRABLE / JPR

As Ashland sees the rapid decline of B&B ownership, the presence of self-serve vacation rentals has increased.

The relief funding helped OSF offset its pandemic-related losses, says Zidell. "[It did not] put OSF ahead of where the organization was, financially, before the pandemic." The festival is still struggling with staffing shortages.

Ashland's retail stores and restaurants are still trying to recover from the festival's closure and stop-start jolts of the pandemic. Those who remained on staff during Covid saw fewer shifts, fewer customers, and a drastic cut in wages. Gibbs credits strong support from locals and services like DoorDash for keeping his restaurants afloat. The Paycheck Protection Program and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund were godsend, although, says Gibbs, only one third of restaurateurs who applied to the Revitalization Fund received assistance (He was not one of them.)

For some, the aid was not enough. On May 10, Standing Stone Brewing Company, a fixture in downtown Ashland for 26 years, announced it would close permanently at the end of the month.

Elisha Lewis, manager at Standing Stone, cites a combination of blows that made recovering impossible, starting with smoky summers that reduced tourist traffic. The spike in the cost of goods and a "frustrating" job market have only added to the challenges.

"As managers, we were left with a much smaller workforce to recruit from," says Lewis. "We continued to offer higher, competitive wages, but we weren't seeing quality candidates apply."

The mass exodus from the restaurant biz is a national trend, and data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that "quit rates" remain higher in foodservice than in any other industry.

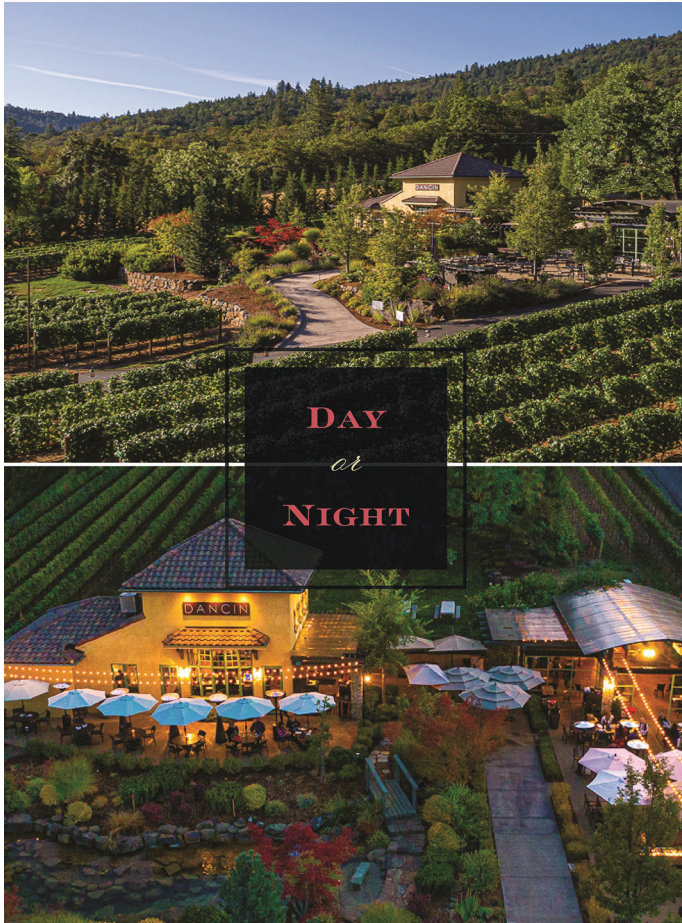
Gibbs was having trouble filling shifts at his two restaurants, so he cut service from five nights a week down to four. Other restaurants are still operating with skeleton crews and have switched to counter service.

The area's housing woes are not helping retain service workers. In Ashland, average home prices and rents were already significantly higher than most of Jackson County before the Alameda Fire devastated the valley. The fire wiped out at least 2,500

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ERIK NEUMANN / JPR

Fresh snow at Mt. Ashland in January, 2021. The local ski resort had some of their most successful seasons during the pandemic.

dwellings between Ashland and Medford, many of them below market rate.

Meanwhile, warming temperatures and a prolonged drought are helping fuel wildfires across the West, all but guaranteeing weeks of compromised air quality at the peak of summer.

"I believe that smoky wildfire seasons are here to stay," says Lewis. "I personally don't have a lot of hope that Ashland in particular will see the same influx of tourists as we did years ago."

Ashland by the numbers

Appealing to visitors through the seasons will be important going forward, given the likelihood of smoky skies in August. One way Travel Ashland will track their progress is through two city taxes: the 10% Transient Occupancy Tax, or TOT, and the 5% tax on prepared foods and beverages, which some refer to as the "meals tax." The TOT is the most closely tied to tourism; it applies to every temporary lodging in town, whether a vacation rental, hotel room, or B&B.

Not surprisingly, revenues from both taxes plunged during the pandemic, but Cato says Ashland recovered more quickly than almost every other region in Oregon, except for the coast.

After a dismal quarter in spring of 2020, revenues from the TOT bounced back slightly that summer. TOT revenues remained depressed throughout 2020 and into 2021, but toward the end of the year, they rebounded. The October through December quarter brought in \$533,830—nearly \$100,000 more than that same period in 2020, and not far below 2019 or 2018 levels.

Continued on page 34

MAUREEN FLANAGAN BATTISTELLA

Honoring Dr. Jim Shames In The Time Of Covid

On Wednesday, March 30, 2022, quilters from all over Southern Oregon gathered outside to thank Dr. Jim Shames for his service as Jackson County Medical Director. The quilters presented Dr. Shames with a quilt of beauty made by many hands and filled with symbolism and meaning.

Hands All Around is a group that quilts for others, meeting weekly in the First Methodist Church in Ashland. They couldn't meet during the covid lockdown, but they continued to quilt for others: CASA, Maslow Project, fire survivors, veterans. Hands All Around and many quilt guilds sew hundreds of quilts every year for those who are in need of comfort and a loving gesture. In the summer of 2021, Hands All Around sent around an invitation to make a block for a quilt to honor Dr. Jim Shames. Mountain Stars Quilters Guild, Rogue Modern Quilters and many others shared out the call.

Within just a few weeks more than 50 quilters from Shady Cove to Grants Pass to Ashland sent a simple 9-patch block in blues and creams. Margaret Carter wrote, "Dr. Shames has indeed been a blessing to Southern Oregon." Elizabeth Donnelly wrote, "Dr. Shames has done so much for our community!" Tenley Tanhoff wrote, "I retired from the Sheriff's Office some years ago; Dr. Shames was jail doctor at the time. He was/is such a kind compassionate man. Would love to honor him."

Many quilters mentioned the comfort they experienced hearing Dr. Shames' weekly segment on Jefferson Public Radio's *Jefferson Exchange* with Geoffrey Riley. Dr. Shames' soft, sometimes halting, non-judgmental voice, his regular communications and consistent public health position made the time alone more bearable, more reasonable. Dr. Shames' patience in the face of interminable weariness was remarkable and inspiring.

Over the months it took to make the quilt, many quilters reviewed the set, commenting on the design, changing the placement of the blocks. Every block was perfectly placed, telling a story in the time of covid.

The center of the quilt represented public health. The blocks don't have sashing and are tight together just as Jackson County public health messaging was consistent, persistent and coherent and as one voice. The patterns of the fabric had meaning: circles for the wheels of ambulances and gurneys, speckles and dots for the epidemiologists who tracked the disease, lines that were the corridors of hospitals and clinics. If you look closely, one block reflects the spiky sphere that is the virus. Two blocks, one at the top is the vaccine and the bottom, the booster.

The four corners of the quilt represented the different zip codes of Jackson County, each somewhat similar in demographics so the shading in each corner was similar too. The zip



Connie Mingue points to the block she made for Dr. Shames' Honor Quilt

codes have neighborhoods, unique to themselves, separated from its neighbors with the sashing of streets, boundaries and community. Further out, there are no roads and no blocks just as in some rural places, street names and house numbers are unimportant.

The three stripes that surround the center are the permeable and impermeable boundaries communities must cross to reach health care and also the roads they traveled. Those who sought vaccinations and the booster, practiced masking and distancing found their way to the center but it wasn't always easy to do so. There were challenges and opportunities as they passed through those barriers: the effort to find a vaccine provider, the difficulty of navigating scheduling websites and waiting forever in long lines. Others couldn't manage to cross those three stripes, whether because of belief systems, politics, health concerns or ignorance. For some the barriers to vaccination were impossible to cross.

And just outside the center in those deep blue spaces health professionals found sleep, finally a chance to rest, safe at home in the dark starry night.

That's the story of Dr. Shames' Honor Quilt, a quilt made in the time of covid. Every stitch is a thank you from the quilters of Southern Oregon.



Maureen Flanagan Battistella is on the Sociology/Anthropology faculty at Southern Oregon University.



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ERIK NEUMANN

This kind of collaboration goes against the natural instincts of journalists. We're a competitive, secretive bunch, skeptical of most things, including each other.

Collaboration is the only way forward.

— Terry Tempest Williams

In May the list of people running to be the next governor of Oregon was an impressive 35 candidates long. All the major parties were represented. There were familiar institutional faces, newcomers and a few wildcards, clearly running on a lark. For small newsrooms like JPR, the list created a logistical problem: how could we fairly cover the top contenders, let alone the many lesser-known hopefuls trying to fill what is arguably the most important seat in Oregon politics in years?

The state of local journalism is well documented. More often than not, newsrooms are shrinking. It's true in Southern Oregon as well as the rest of the country. Since I started at JPR in 2019, the Ashland Tidings was absorbed into its co-owned Medford Mail Tribune. The Klamath Falls Herald and News lost its entire reporting staff and editor in March. It's been restaffed, in part, with the help of an Adams Publishing Group stringer who covers a deeply complex region from Pinellas Park, Florida. The Bandon Western World ceased printing and the Coos Bay World went from publishing five days per week to two.

The reasons for this diminished coverage range from stagnant wages being paid to idealistic young reporters to declining advertising revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic to corporate owners bleeding their newsrooms of the resources they need to do quality work. There are occasional bright spots. The scrappy hyperlocal website Ashland.news started up in January and has quickly gained an audience in the Rogue Valley, but that's a rare exception. It's been challenging at JPR too. The newly competitive job market and "the great resignation" has meant smaller-than-usual pools of applicants for our positions in local journalism.

How then can newsrooms, especially those in small communities, realistically cover topics as big and important as the Oregon governor's race?

Simply put, collaboration.

To better take on this task, JPR partnered with around 20 newsrooms from across the state. They included print outlets like the East Oregonian, radio stations like KLCC in Eugene, and TV outlets like KGW in Portland. The project was the brainchild of Les Zaitz, editor of the Malheur Enterprise and Oregon Capital Chronicle, the nonprofit Rural Development Initiatives and University of Oregon's Agora Journalism Center.

Several roundtable discussions with Oregon voters defined what THEY wanted to see in coverage of the governor's race from the primary through the general election. Together our newsrooms split up and wrote questions for gubernatorial candidates on a variety of urgent topics for Oregonians. Things like:

- The Oregon governor's office is usually reactive when it comes to dealing with drought – sending relief money to

affected counties or providing water deliveries in communities after wells have gone dry. What specific steps would you take to provide long-term solutions for years of increasing drought?

- Some rural counties with small populations and small tax bases struggle with adequate law enforcement funding. What steps would you take to address this chronic problem?
- Coming out of the pandemic, we are seeing unprecedented stress levels in educators, students and parents. As governor, what steps would you take to address this stress and keep our public K-12 schools from imploding?

As well as sharing the workload, this process generated questions on issues from around the state. All 35 candidates were sent a list of 15 questions. The majority responded and their answers were posted on our respective websites.

This kind of collaboration goes against the natural instincts of journalists. We're a competitive, secretive bunch, skeptical of most things, including each other. But this collaboration provided information for voters that few Oregon newsrooms could have come up with individually.

I'm biased, but I think NPR stations like JPR are well-suited for this kind of collaboration. The majority of us are small. Collaboration is baked into our business model with the relationship between members stations and the national NPR network in Washington D.C. which regularly airs local stories. JPR also shares with and borrows from regional stations along the West Coast from KQED in San Francisco to OPB in Portland and KNKX in Seattle.

Since the primary election, the governor's race has narrowed to three top candidates. This Oregon media collaborative is evaluating how our outlets can best partner to improve our coverage as we barrel towards the November election. Should our stations work together to report in-depth stories about the governor's race? Should we share local stories from across the state as candidates make their campaign pitches and promises? We don't know yet.

This project started with suggestions from voters. Hopefully that will continue to guide our effort. If you have suggestions about what our coverage should look like during this election, send me an email and let me know. I'll bring it to the group.



JPR's Erik Neumann is JPR's interim news director.



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Lessons From Oregon's 7th Wave Of COVID-19

COVID-19 is back. Again.

With masks coming off and highly transmissible subvariants of omicron circulating, people who've made it through the pandemic without getting SARS-CoV-2 are suddenly getting it.

People who've had it already are getting it again.

It's Oregon's seventh surge.

It's unfolding in a radically changed world, where most of our immune systems have some antibodies, from vaccines or previous infection, to deploy against the virus.

That's curbing the virus' terrors, if not its spread.

At the peak of the delta wave last summer, there were 197 COVID-19 patients on life support in Oregon. There were fewer than 10.

OPB took its questions about the current wave and what it says about the long-term trajectory of the pandemic to Bill Messer, an expert in viral evolution and a clinician who cares for COVID-19 patients at OHSU.

Here are his observations about what COVID-19 is doing now, and where the pandemic is headed.

1. Things are getting better.

The number of reported cases is way up, close to the peak during the delta wave last summer.

But the number of deaths and hospitalizations remains comparatively low.

And that makes sense. There are more cases in people with some degree of protection from vaccines or previous infection, and the omicron variant is less virulent than delta.

"It may be that it becomes a seasonal respiratory virus but that it won't carry with it the same horrific, devastating impact on our health care infrastructure going forward that it did early in the pandemic," Messer said.

"We're seeing more and more evidence to suggest that that is indeed a likely pattern."

Messer cautions, however, that it's too soon to say for sure if the health effects of COVID will continue to lessen, and there are multiple evolutionary paths the virus can take from here.

2. The omicron variants are super contagious.

We may be approaching the limit of how much more contagious the coronavirus can get.

One of the major ways variants gain an evolutionary advantage is if they have mutations that make them more transmissible.

Each dominant variant of the COVID-19 virus has been more transmissible than the one it replaced.



Prescott Principal Nichole Watson reminds students to keep their mask on their nose as she greets students in line for lunch at Prescott Elementary in Portland, Feb. 8, 2022.

You can see that looking at how the virus' reproduction number, R_0 , has changed. The number measures how many new people each person with the virus infects, absent interventions like masking or vaccines.

The ancestral strain of SARS-CoV-2 had an R_0 of between 2 and 3. That R_0 increased to around 6 for the delta variant. The R_0 is around 12 for the omicron subvariants circulating now.

That makes the novel coronavirus already one of the most contagious viruses ever, on par with chicken pox, but not quite as contagious as the measles.

Messer suspects SARS-CoV-2 is reaching the limit of how much more contagious it can get.

"The number of new cases that arise from a single case cannot continue to rise infinitely," he said. "It's going to plateau somewhere."

That hard limit is due to physical realities, like how many people we can come into contact with while infectious, or how much we can sneeze.

There's always room for incremental increases, but Messer is not expecting another huge leap in contagiousness.

3. The current variants are better at reinfecting us.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the omicron subvariants is their capacity for immune evasion: the ability to reinfect people who've been infected with other COVID-19 variants and to cause breakthrough infections in vaccinated people.

JPR News Focus: Covid-19

Continued from previous page

There are likely a couple of reasons for this. First, research has shown that our immunity to COVID-19 wanes relatively quickly.

And evolution favors variants with mutations that help the virus evade our immune response.

Messer believes that going forward, we will likely see new variants that are better at reinfecting us.

Interestingly, this ability to cause repeat infections relatively frequently is a trait SARS-CoV-2 appears to share with other important coronaviruses: the four viruses that cause the common cold.

Messer said researchers recently learned that People are re-infected with cold viruses about once every 30 months, with evidence that some people can experience multiple infections from the same cold virus within six months or less.

Some of those repeat infections may be too mild to cause symptoms.

Messer believes it's reasonable to think a similar pattern may emerge with COVID-19, where people get short-term immunity from infection or vaccination, but a vaccine that confers five-year immunity is off the table.

"It looks like it's going to be shorter than that, and it is going to be seasonal and cyclical," he said.

4. How sick you'll get with each infection is a key unknown.

While vaccination and prior infection won't completely protect you from COVID-19, you do retain some antibodies that can mount a response to future infections.

Even waning antibodies offer decent protection against the most severe outcomes, like hospitalization and death.

But long-term antibody protection may wane over time, and reinfections are still causing relatively serious symptoms for many people, Messer said.

In terms of its ability to disrupt our lives and cause pain, there's still a huge difference between catching a seasonal COVID-19 variant once a year and a seasonal cold.

Messer said it's hard to know why. It could be that SARS-CoV-2 is just a little different, and nastier, than the common cold coronaviruses.

Or, it could appear nastier because it's still very early days in this pandemic, from an evolutionary point of view.

We don't know how long the four viruses that cause the common cold have been circulating, or if they also appeared more virulent at first.

There is one intriguing set of clues, however.

Some scientists believe they have pinpointed how and when one of the four common cold viruses, human coronavirus OC43, was introduced.

If they're right, it's a scenario with many echoes of the current pandemic.

The researchers have hypothesized that OC43 leaped from cattle to humans about 130 years ago.

It may have been the cause of a well-documented global respiratory pandemic that killed more than 1 million people from 1889 to 1891.

If that hypothesis is correct, Messer said, it strengthens the argument that over some period of years and many repeat infections, SARS-CoV-2 will become a less terrible virus.

"The counterargument is the virus is really agnostic about how virulent it is, it really just wants to be transmissible and survive from host to host," he said.

5. Reformulating vaccines will be tricky

The vaccine most of us have received was formulated to protect against the first COVID-19 virus we encountered. While it's still providing protection against the worst outcomes of infection, it's not a great fit for the omicron subvariants.

Pfizer and Moderna are developing an omicron variant vaccine, but those efforts are moving slowly.

Messer said designing antigens for an omicron variant vaccine isn't that hard.

The bigger problem is whether a new vaccine will earn or lose money for its maker.

Vaccine makers need to see that the public is willing to get an updated version of the COVID-19 vaccine to make it worth investing in it, Messer said.

That may depend in part on how mild, or severe, breakthrough infections are for people who've already been vaccinated.

In addition, vaccine makers will need to bet that the omicron variants will still be the dominant branch of the COVID-19 family tree when a vaccine is ready to get into arms. The virus' rapid evolution makes that uncertain.

"I don't see the clear path forward to the investment in rolling out the next variant vaccine paying off. That's a cynical way of looking at it," Messer said.

6. One simple takeaway: Get your booster.

Messer has yet to catch COVID-19 himself. Part luck, part care, part the privilege of working in a place with masking and good hand hygiene.

He said people like him who are vaccinated but haven't been infected are likely pretty susceptible to getting COVID-19.

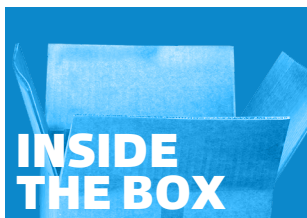
The data is clear that antibodies you get from vaccination wane relatively quickly. And that is a reason, according to Messer, to follow his advice.

"If you haven't gotten a booster," he said, "do it now."



Amelia Templeton is OPB's health reporter, covering COVID-19, health inequality and Oregon's unique approach to health care.

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SCOTT DEWING

Web3 Shall Set Your Data Free

Web3 promises to be the next iteration of the World Wide Web in which data is set free from the confining and exploitative platforms of Big Tech. Web3 is the successor to “Web 2.0” that ushered in the interactive and social networking era of the Web beginning around 2004. Web 2.0 gave rise to Big Tech, the nexus of a handful of tech companies that control most of the content on the Web today: Google, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. (It’s worth mentioning that Facebook and Instagram are owned by parent company Meta and YouTube is owned by Google.)

This was not the future of the World Wide Web that Tim Berners-Lee likely envisioned when he invented the concept back in 1989 so that information (mostly scientific at the time) could be easily posted, linked to, and shared across the Internet. Web 2.0 utilizes the underlying technologies that were invented to make the Web flourish, but the ownership of a majority of the Web’s content has been consolidated from many individual website operators down to Big Tech, which today, accounts for more than 50 percent of all Internet traffic.

When you post text, pictures, and videos to social media platforms you are no longer in control of that data and Big Tech will run it through the algorithmic ringer to squeeze as much profit out of your content and your engagement with their services as possible. This doesn’t make them inherently evil; it’s just the way Web 2.0 has evolved to be profitable.

You could, of course, delete the content you’ve posted on a social media platform, though I suspect your data is not permanently deleted but just hidden from view while its digital ghost continues to haunt the datascape of the massive server farms Big Tech owns and operates around the globe.

You could also, of course, delete your social media accounts and in some cases export some or all of your data. This process may or may not be a simple one nor will it necessarily give you your data in a format that the typical user can then do something useful with, such as port it to another social media platform. For most of us, our data is only useful to us while it exists on a social media company’s platform, which doesn’t make it very portable.

You also can’t take your friends/followers with you to another social media platform. This may not be a big deal for people like me who only have a few hundred friends on Facebook and less than a hundred followers on Twitter. But if you’ve built a large following and depend on that base for your personal brand to have influence and sell products or services, then moving your operation to a new social media platform becomes financially risky and difficult.

Or worse: your account gets banned by the social media platform for violation of its terms of service or community guidelines and now you no longer have access to “your” content

nor a method for communicating with your fan base. Most users will have no recourse but to start all over again on another social media platform. Few will have the means to just go start their own social media company as Donald Trump did after being permanently banned from Twitter in 2021.

Web3 promises to change all of this by decentralizing the Web’s content through the implementation of blockchain. Blockchain is a distributed database technology that enables data to be stored, encrypted, and replicated across a network of computers. Currently, blockchain technology is utilized for cryptocurrency transactions to serve as a distributed and unalterable ledger for financial transactions and contracts. Blockchain is what enables cryptocurrency to function without a central authority such as a bank to provide third-party verification of a transaction. With cryptocurrency, blockchain removes the need for a middleman in a transaction.

In Web3, blockchain has the potential to be used to decentralize user content from Big Tech’s centralized network and software infrastructure, which currently serves as a sort of middleman between content creators and their audiences. Instead of the various social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, owning and controlling your data, you would.

Don’t like the social media platform you’re using? No problem. You just go to another one and all your data goes with you because it always belonged exclusively to you on the blockchain. A new platform emerges that offers a better set of software tools and features or has a terms of service that is a better fit for you? Go for it! You just unlock access to your content for publishing on that new platform using a cryptographic key that only you have access to (or someone you’ve delegated access to such as your publicist if you’re a really big deal).

Clearly the evolution to Web3—if it’s to happen at all—will not happen overnight. The Web is currently deeply entrenched in Web 2.0 and Big Tech currently has little, if any, incentive to change the current paradigm as they are profiting quite well from it. Perhaps some sort of “data portability” legislation would help break this paradigm, but given the current political environment and Congress’s repeated public demonstrations of how embarrassingly little they understand about tech, I’m inclined to believe that won’t be happening anytime soon. If Web3 is to take off and our data to be set free from Big Tech, it will most likely need to happen organically in the same way it has with the emergence of cryptocurrency.



Scott Dewing is a technologist, teacher, and writer. He lives in the State of Jefferson.

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6:30pm The Daily
7:00pm Exploring Music
8:00pm State Farm Music Hall

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5:00am Weekend Edition
8:00am First Concert
10:00am Metropolitan Opera & WFMT Opera Series
2:00pm Played in Oregon

3:00pm The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
4:00pm All Things Considered
5:00pm New York Philharmonic
7:00pm State Farm Music Hall

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5:00am Weekend Edition
9:00am Millennium of Music
10:00am Sunday Baroque
12:00pm Siskiyou Music Hall
2:00pm Performance Today Weekend
4:00pm All Things Considered
5:00pm Chicago Symphony Orchestra
7:00pm Gameplay
8:00pm State Farm Music Hall

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July 23 – *Macbeth* by Giuseppe Verdi

July 30 – *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saëns

August 6 – *Les Plaisirs de Versailles & Les Arts*

Florissants by Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Les Fontaines de Versailles &

Le Concert d'Escupale by

Michel-Richard de Lalande

August 13 – *Almira* by George Frideric Handel

August 20 – *Boris Godunov* by Modest
Mussorgsky

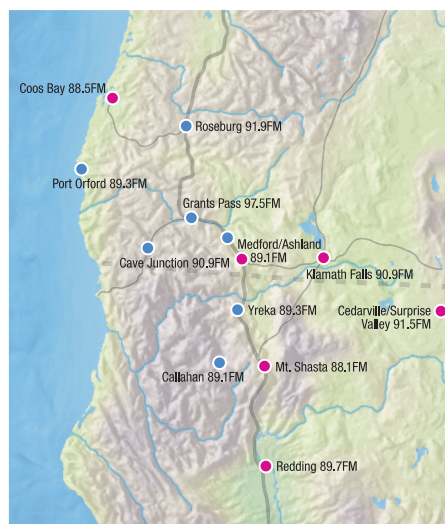
August 27 – *Manon Lescaut* by Giacomo Puccini



Gianluca Margheri in the title role of Handel's *Bajazet*

PHOTO: KIP CARROLL

Rhythm & News Service



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6:00pm World Café
8:00pm Undercurrents
3:00am World Café

Saturday

5:00am Weekend Edition
9:00am Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!
10:00am Radiolab
11:00am Snap Judgement
12:00pm E-Town
1:00pm Mountain Stage
3:00pm Folk Alley
5:00pm All Things Considered
6:00pm American Rhythm

8:00pm The Retro Cocktail Hour
9:00pm The Retro Lounge
10:00pm Late Night Blues
12:00am Undercurrents

Sunday

5:00am Weekend Edition
9:00am TED Radio Hour
10:00am This American Life
11:00am The Moth Radio Hour
12:00pm Jazz Sunday
2:00pm American Routes
4:00pm Sound Opinions
5:00pm All Things Considered
6:00pm The Folk Show
9:00pm Woodsongs
10:00pm The Midnight Special
12:00pm Mountain Stage
1:00am Undercurrents

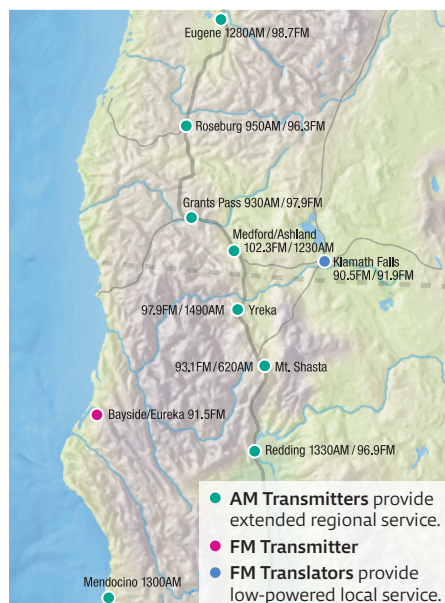
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11:00am Hidden Brain
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1:00pm Science Friday
3:00pm To the Best of Our Knowledge
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Oregon Artist Uses Ancient Process Of Lost-wax Bronze Casting To Make Fine Art Bowls

Like many other artists, San Diego-born Robert Anders supplemented his creative work with “day jobs” that had him living in cities from Minneapolis to Kansas City. But when it came time to consider retirement, Baker City, Oregon, looked like the perfect spot to settle.

“Here in Baker City, we’re surrounded by beautiful nature. And I often work with trees or bushes and I draw my inspiration primarily from these natural objects,” says Anders.

Anders’ inspiration results in plein air paintings, ceramic vessels and finely detailed prints that cover the walls of his workshop and gallery. But it’s Anders’ bronze vessels that make the biggest impression.

Some 30 years ago, Anders got a job at a Colorado foundry and fell in love with lost-wax bronze casting. The ancient craft involves creating a form in wax that then melts out (is “lost”) in the casting process, producing an exact copy in bronze.

“I got the idea that you could probably throw wax on a potter’s wheel for casting directly into bronze. And so that singular idea really just carried me a long way until I realized what a big hot mess that is,” he recalls with a rueful chuckle.

Looking for ways to get the fine-textured results he wanted without burning his hands, Anders decided to build his wax forms on top of models he first molded in clay. Liquid wax is then poured onto the sculpted clay surface to create a wax relief version of the design.

Once dry, the wax form is pried off the clay one for fine tuning with various knives, dremels and finally, a hot iron. Finally, a “sprew” is attached to the bottom. That’s the sort of funnel through which the bronze will be poured. The wax form is then ready for sending off to the foundry for casting.

Fortunately, many places in Eastern Oregon and Washington have bronze foundries. But for Anders, Baker City offered more than just access.

“Because it’s a little isolated, it was quite affordable. Or at least it was 10 years ago,” Anders explains. “I had some retirement and decided to invest and rehab this beautiful old building.”

Anders’ 1890 red brick building was home to a liquor distributor, most notably Cyrus Noble, distiller of “the whiskey that won the west.” The interior space’s 17-foot ceilings give it an expansive feel, which enhances the sense that ideas can roam freely here. In a very real way, the beautifully restored structure is one of his artworks.



JULE GILFILLAN / OPB



DAN EVANS / OPB

TOP: “Bronze provides an open palette to explore various design motifs provided that they flow; natural shapes—the leaves, the branches of a tree—bronze tends to flow that way.” —Robert Anders

BOTTOM: Anders starts his “lost-wax” bronze-making process by carving a design motif into clay.

JPR News Focus: Arts & Culture

Continued from page 27



DAN EVANS / OPB

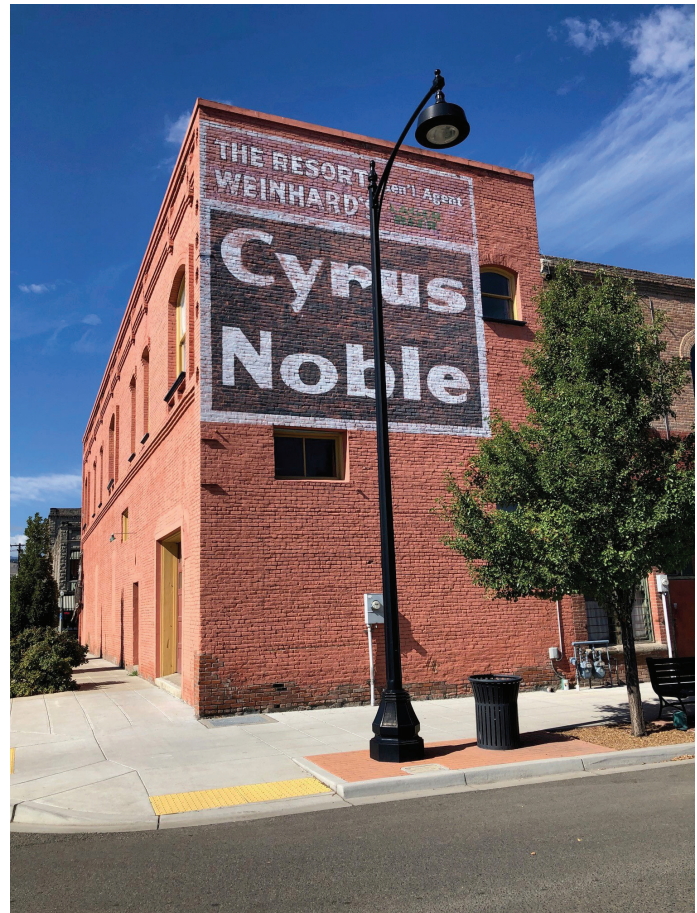
Artist Robert Anders ladles liquid wax over a clay form to create a wax positive. "I've always wanted to do this with chocolate, and make some kind of crazy chocolate bowl." —Robert Anders

Over a two-year stretch, Anders converted the second floor to a 2500-square-foot living space, complete with a working elevator. Downstairs, the building's storefront provides entry to a gallery where he shows his work. Behind the gallery, the artmaking space contains both a quiet, clean painting studio as well as a workshop with a garage door that opens to the street.

"That's my dirty workplace where I grind and work on bronze and make a big mess," he laughs.

Anders' lofty live-work space gives him all the room, tools and resources he needs to produce an abundance of artwork. But after a lifetime of doing just that, Anders still approaches his work with reverence and humility.

"I'm striving to be competent as a craftsman, as a painter. I've gone through all the iterations of trying to paint in realism



ROBERT ANDERS / COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Robert Anders' 1890 Baker City live-work space is the former home of a liquor distributor, including the "Whiskey that won the West."

and loosening back up. Or trying to sculpt in realism and then loosening back up. My art practice is really about letting things roll, kind of letting them unfold, seeing how they develop."



Jule Gilfillan is an Emmy-winning producer for OPB's documentary shows, Oregon Art Beat and Oregon Field Guide.



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MONICA SAMAYOA

One of the key findings from the report said young people often feel dismissed by older generations and not taken seriously by elected leaders.

Oregon Health Authority Release Report After Hosting Focus Groups With Young People Across The State.

Anger. Guilt. Shame.

Young people in Oregon say they're experiencing these emotions as they face the impacts of climate change, according to a study released in mid-June by the Oregon Health Authority.

The agency's report, *Climate Change and Youth Mental Health in Oregon*, highlights how extreme weather events like wildfires, heatwaves, snowstorms and drought are creating fear, frustration, and hopelessness among young people. OHA partnered with the University of Oregon's suicide prevention unit to host virtual focus groups with people between ages 15 and 25 and interviewed professionals working in mental health, education and public health.

"We want to see more youth mental health support in schools and in our communities," Mecca Donovan, a 23-year-old from Eugene, said. "We want to see youth invited to the table and decision making."

Donovan, who helped host the focus groups, said she wants to see more accountability and acknowledgment of the challenges young people are facing.

One of the key findings from the report said young people often feel dismissed by older generations and not taken seriously by elected leaders.

"Burnout is just really, really bad," Eliza Garcia, a recent UO political science graduate, said. "I think that's the biggest thing that I've felt within the movement and the biggest thing that I've had other people my age or younger than me talk to me about, it's just the burnout that comes from having to feel like we're doing this all alone."

Garcia said she felt pressured to switch her focus to climate justice because more action is needed.

"I felt very much I had to work on it and very much like, 'if I'm not working on this issue right now, then what am I doing?'" she said.

Garcia said she's turned down events and opportunities so she can fight against climate change and that pressure has affected her mental health. She said she's particularly concerned about younger activists.

"Now there's kids, you know, middle school, like, beginning of high school that are getting into it and when you're starting that young, I can see that these kids are getting burnt out already and they're not even 20 yet," she said.

Andres De La Rosa-Hernandez, 25, is a peer-to-peer support specialist in Monmouth. He provides support for people between the ages of 14 to 25 and helps them with life changes or issues they are going through. He said a major concern is all



KRISTYNA WENTZ-GRAFF / OPB

Thousands of area youth climate activists and supporters marched through downtown Portland on May 20, 2022. The Oregon Health Authority issued a report on Tuesday detailing the impacts of climate change on the mental health of young Oregonians.

the climate change information young people receive on social media.

"They see an article about the polar ice caps melting or about rising water, anything like that it's hard for them to focus on whatever they're working on when they think about how the world is ending around them," De La Rosa-Hernandez said.

He said he's also feeling the same burnout from having to deal with so much at once. Most of the people in his circle also feel the same way.

A conversation he has repeatedly had with his wife is whether they want to have children and what their future would look like. De La Rosa-Hernandez said they ask themselves if they really want to bring a child into such an uncertain world.

Another emotion De La Rosa-Hernandez deals with is survivors' guilt. During the 2020 Labor Day fires, he said he received messages from friends that their homes were on fire or had to evacuate. This prompted him to pack his bags and be ready to go but his area did not have to evacuate.

"While I was very thankful to the universe that I didn't have to evacuate, I didn't lose all my stuff, I stopped and thought about everyone who did lose things and ended up with a survivor's guilt of 'why was it me?' he said. "Like is it just the area I'm living in? Why did the universe, I guess in a way punish them and not me?"

Down To Earth

Continued from previous page

Julie Early Sifuentes, an OHA program manager and the study's lead author, said the report was designed to elevate youth voices and to better understand what steps are needed to help youth feel hopeful. She said she hopes the report will generate conversations among families and local organizations and inform policy decisions within state and city agencies.

OHA completed the report under Gov. Kate Brown's executive order 20-04 which directs state agencies to act and regulate greenhouse gas emissions and study the harmful effects of climate change. The report concluded with the importance of sharing power in decision-making about climate and mental health policy and solutions. It also suggested increasing funds for mental health services to provide for schools and communities in need.



Monica Samayoa is an award-winning journalist with OPB's Science & Environment unit.



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Photo courtesy Bob Palermini
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GEOFF RIDDEN

unseen is a superb piece of theatre created by an exceptional cast and crew.

“Make this island happy” *Henry VI Part Two*

The 2022 season at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival opened in April with *Once on This Island* (book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, music by Stephen Flaherty, directed by Lili-Anne Brown) and *unseen* (by Mona Mansour, directed by Evren Odcikin).

Although these are both one-act productions, they are very different in character and in background: one has a company of sixteen actors plus musicians and will be in the Angus Bowmer Theatre until the end of October; the other has a cast of three and will be in the Thomas Theatre until the end of July. One had successful runs on Broadway and elsewhere in the early 1990s; the other opened to mixed reviews in Chicago in 2017. I went to see them with different sets of expectations.

This could be a season for islands at OSF—*The Tempest* will have opened by the time you read this column, and although Ashland may never see productions of *The Enchanted Island* (a 1667 adaptation of Shakespeare by John Dryden and William Davenant) or *Une Tempête* (a 1969 updating by Aimé Césaire), *Once on This Island*, set on the island of Haiti, brings colonialism and the supernatural front and center.

This is a production which will delight audiences: the set, costumes (and the speed of the costume changes!), the lighting and sound perfectly complement the quality of the music, singing and choreography. There are twenty-three musical numbers

within the ninety-five minutes of the performance, so this is more than just a musical—there is very little spoken dialogue at all. All the more reason to rejoice in the exceptional singing talents on display, notably Ciera Dawn as the central character, Ti Moune, and Chuckie Benson, Phyre Hawkins, Michael Wordly and Camille Robinson as the gods who determine her fate. The dancing is at times breathtaking, not only from Ciera Dawn but also from the excellent Emmanuel Kikoni.

I can’t remember a non-Shakespeare play at OSF which I have enjoyed so much since *Destiny of Desire* in 2018—the difference being that part of the enjoyment of that earlier play came from seeing familiar actors in very different roles: in this case all of the cast are new to the company, and their very freshness is engaging and infectious. The young Ayvah Johnson as Little Ti Moune is especially enchanting, and no doubt a bright future lies ahead for her and indeed for all the rest of this cast.

I had a slight concern before the show began that the monitors situated in the two vomitoria which enabled the onstage actors to see the offstage musicians might prove a distraction, but the action onstage was so riveting that this did not prove a problem at all.

When I saw *unseen* (and I recognize the irony in those words), I could only think that the reviewers of the Chicago production were completely misguided or that this version of the



PHOTO BY JENNY GRAHAM / OSF



PHOTO BY JENNY GRAHAM / OSF

unseen (2022): Nora el Samahy and Helen Sadler.

LEFT: *Once on This Island* (2022): Dominique Lawson, Ayvah Johnson, Ciera Dawn, and Ensemble.

Theatre

Continued from previous page

play had a script which was much improved from the 2017 version, a better cast, a better director or a combination of all three.

The play centers on the experience of a conflict photographer and the impact that her experience has upon her and on those closest to her, especially when she suffers a sudden mental collapse in Syria. In some ways the play is a mystery—just what has happened to Mia (Helen Sadler)?

In other respects, it is a play about language and the complexities of what we mean by “seeing” and by “bearing witness”. The staging itself engages with that ambiguity: the audience sits on either side of the set (a room) rather as if we were watching a tennis match, or if we were voyeurs, outside of a building but privy to the secrets held within. It asks us to consider what the audience for a photograph (or a play) might see, or what they might be led to believe they see. At the climax, when Mia finally gets to see the remaining, unpublished photos in her camera, we, the audience, don’t get to see them—we can only imagine. And we almost certainly imagine different images.

The play also operates in several languages, requiring impressive linguistic dexterity on the part of the actors, but it also mixes comedy with its serious message, especially in the

reaction of Jane, Mia’s American mother (played by Caroline Shaffer) to the relationship between her daughter and Derya (played by Nora el Samahy), and to being somewhere which certainly isn’t Kansas. The play may not include an island, but it is certainly concerned with differences in culture.

I slept badly on the night after I see this production: I had so much to think about, so much to remember. *unseen* is a superb piece of theatre created by an exceptional cast and crew.

Both of these excellent plays are supported by printed Playbills and each has extra information available online.



Geoff Ridden has taught in universities in Africa, Europe and North America. Since moving to Ashland in 2008, he has become a familiar figure on radio, in the theatre, in the lecture hall and on the concert stage. He is artistic director of the Classic Readings Theatre Company and has a particular interest in adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare. Email geoff.ridden@gmail.com



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In 2018, the state started quietly increasing the number of children placed in foster care who were sent to facilities in other states.

Oregon Agency Wants To Make It Harder To Access Records That Could Reveal Systemic Child Abuse

Despite pledges to increase transparency, officials at the Oregon Department of Human Services are considering a move that would make it harder for the public to access child abuse investigations. Similar records in the past have helped reveal systemic child abuse.

The state agency is considering narrowing the type of abuse records that can be accessed for children who are placed in care outside of a home, such as a boarding school, a wilderness facility or some other kind of residential program. The rule change being proposed would allow agency leaders to largely deny most public records requests, blocking any details of substantiated or unsubstantiated abuse.

In 2018, the state started quietly increasing the number of children placed in foster care who were sent to facilities in other states.

Initially, child welfare officials didn't alert the public or lawmakers. They often delayed responding to public records requests in a timely fashion, including revealing the names of the facilities where children were sent. Two years later, after a protracted battle to get the agency to turn over relevant records it was evident most of the youth being abused were being sent to facilities owned by one company. That company has now been forced to close its residential treatment facilities across the nation, and Oregon leaders have pledged to no longer send children out of state.

It's likely none of this would be known without the type of public records agency officials now want to make it harder to obtain.

Sen. Sara Gelser Blouin, D-Corvallis, who has carved out a reputation for watchdogging the state agency and relied on records to uncover abuse herself, said she's worried the proposed rule protects adults, not vulnerable young people.

"Confidentiality should protect children and families and not the state and people who are paid to take care of children and have harmed them," Gelser Blouin said.

The Oregon Department of Human Services tried to convince legislators to make this change in 2021, but lawmakers refused.

Now, the agency is trying to accomplish the same goal through a more obscure pathway: the rulemaking process.

During a legislative hearing in 2021, a Department of Human Services employee said the change was simply technical in



Oregon state Sen. Sara Gelser Blouin, D-Corvallis, shown here in this Jan. 14, 2019 file photo, who has carved out a reputation for watchdogging the state agency and relied on records to uncover abuse herself, says she's worried the proposed rule protects adults, not vulnerable young people.

nature and was designed to ensure children and witnesses who reported abuse were protected.

The names of witnesses and children are already currently redacted when the agency releases records.

In that committee hearing, Gelser Blouin pushed back; she noted that the agency that is charged with overseeing some of the most vulnerable children, including those placed in foster care, has not always been forthcoming in producing records.

Gelser Blouin said she worried giving the agency more discretionary power over what information to release could eventually result in "a threat to child safety overall."

Jake Sunderland, a spokesman with Oregon Department of Human Services, said the effort began when an employee within the department's Office of Training, Investigations and Safety (OTIS) noted their belief that the level of information being disclosed in Oregon could conflict with federal child welfare privacy laws.

JPR News Focus: Politics

Continued from previous page

“There is a lack of clarity whether that is actually an issue,” Sunderland said, adding the agency is now planning on a comprehensive analysis to determine whether that is the case.

Sunderland said the agency is going to extend the public comment period of the rulemaking process to allow for further discussion.

As currently written, the rule change would allow some exceptions: for example, the agency would still have to release information when a child dies or in quarterly reports to lawmakers.

Arthur Towers, with the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association, also submitted testimony against the legislative version of the change in 2021.

“We seek to hold abusers accountable and sometimes we seek to hold the state accountable if the state has acted negligently in its oversight of the child welfare system,” Towers wrote in submitted testimony. “... Our members see the worst cases and so we are extremely sensitive about access to information about what has happened that led to the abuse of a child.”



Lauren Dake is a political reporter and producer for Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Ashland Tourism

Continued from page 16

“We’ve heard anecdotally from our partners that the end of 2021 was one of the strongest (third quarters) they’ve ever experienced,” says Cato, adding that lodging owners were able to keep their room rates up through this period. “There’s some momentum afoot.”

After months of feeling penned in by the pandemic, many people were finally feeling safe enough to travel in the window between Delta and Omicron waves. Some were lured by Mt. Ashland’s exceptional early powder and OSF’s first ever holiday production, *It’s Christmas, Carol!*

“We had people showing up in December just to go to that show,” says Gibbs. “This year it will be even better.”

The holiday show is but one example of how the festival is adjusting to new realities and attempting to attract new playgoers.

In 2022, the first full season under Artistic Director Nataka Garrett, OSF is offering eight live shows and three virtual productions. The company has done away with its “dynamic pricing” model, where ticket prices fluctuated with demand; instead, ticket prices are fixed and have been slashed across the board. Prices range from \$35 to \$75, whereas top tickets used to go for \$132.

Garrett and Executive Director David Schmitz instituted these changes “to increase accessibility and inclusion and to lead the American theater at large in that direction,” says Zidell. They are also a response to the declining audience numbers Garrett and Schmitz inherited when they joined OSF, he adds. According to data from OSF’s annual reports, attendance, as measured by percentage of theater seats filled, had declined in the years leading up to the pandemic. In the years from 2006 to 2015, attendance percentages ranged in the high 80s to low 90s; in the period from 2016 to 2019, they had dipped to the low to mid 80s.

The 2022 schedule is also staggered so that fewer shows are running in late summer, when it’s often smoky. Two shows close at the end of July and two new shows open in mid and late August.

The challenges are not going away. Inflation, high gas prices, and another drought-fueled fire season may yet dampen enthusiasm for travel. On the other hand, a whole new group of people may catch wind of Ashland’s world-class mountain biking trails or wine scene, load up the car, and go—and catch a play while they’re at it.

“We have the arts and culture; we’re not stepping away from that,” says Cato. “We’re just constantly building upon it.”

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Juliet Grable is a freelance writer based in Southern Oregon. She writes about wild places and wild creatures, rural communities, and the built environment.

The threat of retroactive tariffs halted most imports of solar panels into the U.S., sending prices on stateside products skyrocketing.

Oregon Solar Industry Welcomes Tariff Pause

Relief may be on the way for Oregon's solar industry, which has been hampered in recent months by a federal trade investigation.

President Joe Biden on Monday announced a two-year pause on new tariffs on the solar industry. The move is expected to restart the flow of cheaper panels and parts into U.S. ports. Solar workers in Oregon are welcoming the decision and say they hope it will ease a panel shortage that has delayed or killed hundreds of solar projects nationwide.

"While not a complete resolution, the 24 months will allow solar projects to continue and time for the market to find a solution," said Angela Crowley-Koch, executive director of the Oregon Solar and Storage Industries Association, in an email.

The U.S. Department of Commerce in March launched an investigation into manufacturers in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, which supply about 80% of the solar panels imported by the U.S. The agency seeks to determine whether Chinese companies propped up factories in those countries in order to avoid tariffs.

If the Commerce Department finds panels from the manufacturers in question are indeed subject to tariffs, those duties could have been retroactively applied to panels purchased after the probe began.

The threat of retroactive tariffs halted most imports of solar panels into the U.S., sending prices on stateside products skyrocketing. Biden's announcement temporarily eliminates that threat, which should allow prices to settle and the market to stabilize.

Mike August with CED Greentech in Portland and Bend said the president's decision provides clarity to solar importers and distributors.

"Pricing markets can get more efficient information to say, 'OK, we have this much material now coming,'" August said. "Where before it was, 'We don't know how much we're going to release.'"

Ryan Sheehy of Fleet Development in Enterprise had orders canceled as the Commerce investigation got underway. That forced his company to push back timelines on some larger projects such as the Verde Light Power Project in Ontario.

Sheehy said the president's announcement, while positive, will not allow the company to finish Verde in 2022 as he had hoped before the investigation started. However, Sheehy added that many projects — in Oregon and elsewhere — that might have otherwise been canceled can now resume.

"People who wouldn't sell us [solar] modules yesterday, will today," Sheehy said.



Solar panels at the Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility near Lexington, Ore.

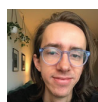
KRISTYNA WENTZ-GRAFF / OPB

The trade investigation was prompted by a petition from a small solar manufacturer in California, Auxin Solar, which claimed the alleged tariff evasion by Chinese companies was weakening U.S. manufacturing.

In Monday's announcement, Biden also invoked the Defense Production Act to encourage more manufacturing of solar panels and parts in the U.S. The two-year pause on tariffs will create a "bridge," the White House said, to continue building solar projects while domestic manufacturing scales up.

Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said in a statement Monday that the agency will continue its investigation, but applauded the president's actions.

"I remain committed to upholding our trade laws and ensuring American workers have a chance to compete on a level playing field," Raimondo said. "The President's emergency declaration ensures America's families have access to reliable and clean electricity while also ensuring we have the ability to hold our trading partners accountable to their commitments."



Bradley Parks is a reporter and photojournalist covering science and environment from Oregon Public Broadcasting's Bend bureau.

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WILDFIRE

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California Wants To Force Insurers To Reward Homeowners For Fireproofing Homes

New rules proposed by California's Department of Insurance would require insurers to take homeowners' efforts to reduce wildfire risk into account when setting premiums. But they would still allow non-renewals.

When Ashley Raveche and her husband bought their home in Mill Valley, they thought they were doing everything right. The 1,300 square foot house already had vents with screens that make it harder for embers to get in and a tar and gravel roof, top-rated for fire safety.

They installed double-paned windows, which are less likely to explode under extreme heat. They cut down four trees within 10 feet of their house. They kept the gutter and roof clear, and the local fire marshal performed an annual inspection.

But their efforts – totaling more than \$10,000, by Raveche's estimation – weren't enough to insure their home in Marin County. In February, their insurance company said it wouldn't renew the policy because the "risk is unacceptable"

"I panicked," she said. "I was just like, 'This is too much, we are doing absolutely everything we possibly can.'"

It was the second time an insurance company had declined to renew her home insurance coverage in five years, she said.

In response to wildfires that have blazed across the state, some Californians have spent thousands of dollars trying to fireproof their homes – often at the urging of state and local officials – to reduce their risk of burning. But some have confronted an unpleasant reality: Taking those steps doesn't prevent their premiums from ballooning, or keep them from being dropped by their insurance company.

Now the California Department of Insurance has proposed new rules that would require insurance companies to take homeowners' preventative steps into account when setting premiums. The rules would also require companies to be more transparent about how they gauge a home's wildfire risk.

But some consumer groups are ringing alarms about what they see as loopholes that would leave homeowners stuck, like Raveche, with a fire-hardened home and a non-renewal letter. Insurance industry trade groups, on the other hand, worry that the rules are getting ahead of science, and that transparency requirements would expose intellectual property.

The agency plans to have the rules finalized this summer.

New fire insurance guidelines

The proposed rules, rolled out in February, require insurance companies to do several things, including:



Ashley Raveche stands in her front yard thinking about the future of fire for her neighborhood in Mill Valley on Friday, May 20, 2022.

- Make the models or tools they use to assess wildfire risk public, and require that companies send individual policyholders their wildfire risk scores on a regular basis
- Explain to policyholders what specific factors influenced each consumer's score, what they could do to lower their score, and how much they can expect to see their premium go down if they take the actions outlined by the insurance company
- When setting prices, insurers would have to take into account whether a homeowner or commercial property owner has reduced a property's wildfire risk by taking specified steps, including clearing vegetation from under decks and installing fire-resistant vents
- When setting prices, insurers would have to take into account whether a home is in one of three types of fire risk-reduction communities, such as Firewise.

The state Department of Insurance also proposed giving policyholders the right to appeal their wildfire risk scores.

Part of the goal is to provide incentives to more people to protect their properties from wildfires. "Money is tight for most people," said Amy Bach, executive director of United Policyholders, a consumer group.

JPR News Focus: Wildfire

Continued from previous page

“If I have a choice between spending money on taking out my favorite tree, and, like, buying a new flatscreen, I’m going to buy a new flatscreen, right?” There has to be a compelling reason for people to do things they don’t want to do, she said.

“Home hardening” is aimed at reducing a house’s risk of burning during a blaze. There’s evidence to suggest it works, too: A 2020 study from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners found that “structural modifications can reduce wildfire risk up to 40%, and structural and vegetation modifications combined can reduce wildfire risk up to 75%.”

California already regulates insurance more than a lot of other products. Insurers, for example, can’t just increase their prices whenever they want to – they have to submit their pricing plans to the insurance department for approval. But, says Bach, that’s in part because they have an advantage most industries don’t: People must buy their product in order to get a mortgage.

“They sell economic security,” said Bach. “They have a special obligation.”

That’s why it’s stressful for homeowners when an insurance company decides it will no longer cover them. When homeowners can’t find a private company to cover them, they can turn to the state-created FAIR Plan, which offers bare bones coverage, often at higher cost. Coverage through the FAIR Plan is intended as “a temporary safety net” until a homeowner can find other coverage.

“A loophole that can swallow the rule”

Steve Poizner, who lives 15 minutes from the San Jose airport, said he took some extra steps to protect his home after an insurance agent came out to inspect the property. He said he upgraded his fireproof vents and cleared vegetation around the house, and the company gave him a policy.

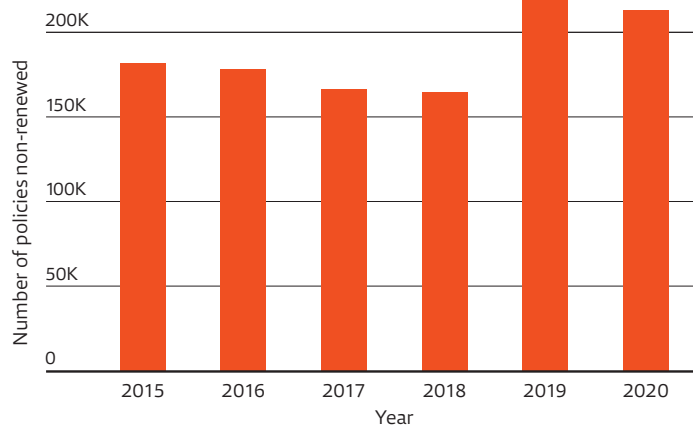
“That was that. For years,” Poizner told CalMatters. Then, he said, early this year he got a letter. His insurance company wouldn’t renew his coverage, he said, and he was “stunned.” Poizner is no naïf: He was California’s insurance commissioner from 2007 to 2011.

The number of Californians who are not renewed by their insurance companies each year increased in 2019, according to insurance department data, after especially damaging wildfires in 2017 and 2018. It’s a small share of policyholders: less than 3%, according to the department. The numbers are higher in areas with greater fire risk. Temporary bans on non-renewals in areas hit by wildfires, imposed by Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, have helped, although the issue is still a key part of the election race for insurance commissioner.

It’s far from certain the numbers will stay low. The number of California properties facing severe wildfire risk will grow sixfold over the next 30 years, according to projections from First Street Foundation, a nonprofit.

Surge in insurance non-renewals

Insurer chose not to renew home insurance policies with more Californians following intense wildfires in 2017 and 2018.



SOURCE: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

Three consumer groups – Consumer Watchdog, Consumer Federation of America and Consumer Federation of California – sent feedback to the insurance department, pointing to what they see as a loophole: The rules require insurers to take home-hardening efforts into account when setting prices, but not when deciding whether to cover someone or renew a policy.

“A homeowner could literally rebuild their home in concrete, in the middle of a concrete field, and still be non-renewed by an insurance company,” said Carmen Balber, executive director of Consumer Watchdog.

“It is a loophole that can swallow the rule,” she said.

Insurance department spokesperson Michael Soller rejected the term “loophole.” He pointed to the department’s initial reasoning for the rules and expected benefits, which says insurance companies “may become more comfortable writing and retaining policies for properties with completed mitigation actions, even if the property is located in an area with a higher overall risk of wildfire.”

Not wading into coverage decisions may also have been a pragmatic decision for the department. Insurers would be more likely to sue over rules that mandate coverage, since the department’s authority to regulate coverage decisions is not clear cut, said Michael Wara, a lawyer and climate scholar at Stanford Law School. A suit could keep the rules from going into effect for years.

“This may be a situation where you kind of have to choose between doing something that’s sort of pretty good – maybe even really good –but not perfect,” said Wara.

Insurers want to protect their risk tools. Consumer groups aren’t the only ones pushing back against the proposal. Trade organizations representing insurers have their own set of concerns.

One is that the science on wildfire mitigation is still developing, said Mark Sektnan, vice president for state government relations for American Property Casualty Insurance Association, a trade group. That means there may not be good data on exactly how much one strategy – or several – reduces a homeowner’s fire risk, and insurers need data to decide how much of a discount to offer.

The proposed rules, for example, would require companies to take into account whether a home is in a “Fire Risk Reduction Community,” a new certification created by the state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. The criteria for the certification was finalized last month, according to Edith Hannigan, the Board’s executive officer, and the list of the communities that meet the requirements is yet to be released. There hasn’t been any significant analysis on how much safer certified communities are, since it’s brand new, Hannigan said.

That’s problematic, said Seren Taylor, senior legislative advocate for Personal Insurance Federation of California, another insurance industry trade group, because everything in insurance “is about understanding risk and having data.”

The new program was “established with the expertise of the Board of Forestry, with consideration of community programs like Firewise,” said Michael Soller, a spokesperson for the Department of Insurance.

Ashley Raveche’s concrete back yard is seen in Mill Valley on Friday, May 20, 2022.

Another concern Taylor cited has to do with intellectual property. Many insurers rely on models, often provided by separate companies, to assess the risk of wildfire to a particular home or area, taking into account factors like the slope a home is on, or the kind of roof it has.

The rules require insurers to make those models public. “These companies spend tens of millions of dollars building complex computer models,” said Taylor, and they want to create models that are more accurate than their competitors.

“What our folks are concerned about is that these modelers will say, ‘Well, we’re not going to use our most innovative new models, because why would we invest in that technology if we’re just going to have to hand it to our competitors? So we’ll give you version 2.0, but you’re not going to have version 4.0,’” Taylor said.

Still, he said, the federation completely agrees with the goals of the proposed rules – they point in the direction some insurers are already heading.

Currently 20 insurance companies voluntarily give homeowners some kind of discount for reducing their wildfire risk, according to the insurance department.

Still trying in Mill Valley

Raveche’s community, meanwhile, is using some cutting-edge measures to prepare for wildfire.

More than 250 Mill Valley residents piled into their cars to simulate an evacuation, with Google researchers standing by and gathering data to model traffic flow. Her community partnered with NASA, so fire officials can access high-quality satellite images during an active fire, she said. Raveche, who is a board member of her fire district, just wrote a guide for short-term rentals so that visitors can figure out evacuation routes and sign up for emergency alerts.

After her insurer declined to renew her policy in February, she was able to get coverage from another company. But despite her many efforts, she’s not optimistic it will last.

“I think it’ll probably be covered for two years, maybe three,” she said. “And then I see them dropping us.”



Grace Gedye covers California’s economy for CalMatters. Previously, she was an editor at the *Washington Monthly*. She is a graduate of Pomona College.

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Kirk Siegler

During the lockdowns, Cilker did odd jobs around the ranch and sometimes played live for the cowboys and the veterinarians.

Rural Singer-Songwriter Margo Cilker's Pandemic Hustle Is Paying Off

The pandemic was especially tough for up-and-coming musicians from smaller cities and towns. But for at least one country rocker from the rural Northwest, it may have leveled the playing field.

Margo Cilker's songs bring listeners to the West's more forgotten places: from the 99 freeway through California farm country south to Tehachapi Pass to the north and Jordan Valley, Ore.

"Took a room at the old Basque hotel, it was like a kind of prayer when eyelids fell," go the lyrics from *That River*, the first track on her first full length LP *Pohorylle*.

The lack of live gigs over the past two years was especially tough on up-and-coming musicians from smaller cities and towns like Cilker. But in the end it may have leveled the playing field some.

"I was one of the lucky ones to come out of the pandemic with more of an opportunity in the industry," Cilker says.

Originally from the suburban Bay Area in California, Cilker has spent most of her burgeoning career based in the rural Northwest from remote eastern Oregon to eastern Washington, where her husband works as a ranch hand.

During the lockdowns, Cilker did odd jobs around the ranch and sometimes played live for the cowboys and the veterinarians. And she wrote, a lot. Everyone was remote and virtual and her rural life figured heavily into her music. It appears to have given her career an early boost.

"So many people are out there concentrated in big cities, and it shows in their writing," Cilker says. "It becomes in itself homogenous. I've never felt like I could move to Nashville or

Continued on page 42



PHOTO: KIRK SIEGLER

Singer songwriter Margo Cilker has carved out a niche performing original country songs from her home in rural Washington state.



CHELSEA ROSE

The evidence emerging from the work at White Sands National Park is helping to expand our understanding of human migration, adaptation, and survivance.

Footsteps From The Past

Archaeologists often feel like they are walking in the footsteps of the past, and Carol Ellick and Joe Watkins of Archaeology and Cultural Education Consultants (ACE) got to do just that. Now this story starts like many good ones— with a cry of “Bigfoot!”—but it ends with something far more exciting than the coveted proof of Sasquatch: evidence that pushes the peopling of the Americas back nearly 10,000 years. We were joined by Carol and Joe on our May episode of *Underground History* to hear about the ways these ice age human footprints are helping to re-write history (sorry Bigfoot fans, you are going to have to keep looking).

These footprints were discovered in what is now White Sands National Park, but was once an ancient lake in the Tularosa Basin of south-central New Mexico. Due to the unique geology of the site, the gypsum-rich mud unexpectedly captured a snapshot of the people living alongside Lake Otero. Carol, Joe, and the rest of the project team got to observe casual and very relatable moments like walking, working, and carrying kids as you went about daily life. These unscripted and otherwise undocumented movements are always fun to find as they really connect us with the humanity of the people that we study. In this case, they are even cooler because giant sloths are involved. Yes, you read that right. These footsteps are so old that we get an incredible glimpse into a period of time when humans lived alongside long-extinct Pleistocene megafauna such as Columbian mammoths, giant sloths, camels, dire wolves, and the American lion. This ancient co-habitation is one that many archaeologists have long suspected, and Indigenous people have always known.

Tangible evidence of the lives of ancient people living in places like New Mexico help us to better understand the long and complex relationship between humans and the environment. The undulating landscape of white sand dunes that makes for such great selfies today would have been unrecognizable to the folks walking around there over 20,000 years ago. The gypsum mud that preserved human footprints and animal tracks also held precious data about the plants that grew around them. This organic matter was used to date the various layers of footprints and recreate the surrounding environment over time. People have remained in this area for millennia, even as the weather changed, lakes dried out, resources shifted, and cities were built.

The evidence emerging from the work at White Sands National Park is helping to expand our understanding of hu-



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE WATKINS AND CAROL ELICK

Carol Ellick works in one of the excavation units where ice age footprints were discovered.

man migration, adaptation, and survivance. Researchers have lamented that much of the evidence of early humans on the west coast is now underwater, but this exciting project suggests that additional data could be present in other places with similar geological conditions. Interdisciplinary studies like this one bring a range of scientists together to explore the deep history of a specific place, and that is incredibly valuable. Whether you are in Oregon or New Mexico, we are all experiencing shifting weather patterns and new or expanded hazards associated with Climate Change.

Underground History

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CREDIT: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

White Sands has the largest collection of fossilized human footprints.

There is undoubtedly much we can learn from the resiliency of these early Americans. While archaeological data can sometimes feel impersonal, this project presents us with an intimate connection with a mother, as she walked along the shrinking shoreline of Lake Otago carrying her child, and perhaps worrying about its future. Unbeknownst to her, her descendants would watch the lake dry, animals disappear, and the world change in unprecedented ways. But thanks to an environmental fluke, her path that day was preserved so that we can see she was there. To find out more about this fascinating research, check out the NOVA's new *Ice Age Footprints* documentary on PBS, and be sure to watch your step.



Chelsea Rose is an archaeologist with the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology (SOULA) and co-host of the 2022 Oregon Heritage Excellence Award winning *Underground History*, a monthly segment that airs during the *Jefferson Exchange* on JPR's News & Information service.

Recordings

Continued from page 40

L.A., or New York. Nothing about it would feed my art."

And even though she doesn't live in those traditional music hotbeds, she's still getting noticed. Seattle indie rocker Sera Cahoone is helping produce her second LP, which is due out later this year. This summer, Cilker also landed a lucrative gig touring with Texas singer-songwriter Hays Carll.

The country rocker Cilker appears to be part of a small but growing trend of musicians who are realizing they can stay where they are and still be successful coming out of the pandemic. And in some cases, some are even leaving the cities in favor of smaller towns, according to Sean Lynch, who manages two indie rock bands and a club in Billings, Mont.

"The consumer at this point in time has anything available to them that they want," Lynch told NPR. "If it's good, it's good. It doesn't matter if it's from Billings, Montana, or it's from New York City. If it's good, people are going to listen to it."

Touring and live shows are key to making money right now for any band or singer, and this has especially been the case coming out of the pandemic. Lynch advises his just-starting-out artists that it's a lot tougher to make money and afford to go out on tour today if they do live in a Nashville or Los Angeles due to high rents.

While on her tour – her schedule has lately picked back up in earnest – Margo Cilker has been thinking a lot about how her art can dispel stereotypes about rural life. Interviewed on stage at the Treefort Music Festival in Boise in March, she said she often sees more women working on cattle branding crews than on the booking lineup at music festivals.

Cilker sees herself and her music as straddling the line, moving through both worlds of a divided America.

"I will see something and I'll tell myself this is why people hate liberals," she says, laughing. "And then I'll see something ridiculous on the other end of the spectrum, and it's like, of course, this is why everyone flock to the major cities."

Among the crowd favorites at the Boise festival was a song inspired by the work of Oregon poet laureate Kim Stafford called *Barbed Wire (Belly Crawl)*.

"There's a farmer we know, steps into the tavern, where the bright lights seize the mind," she sings. "The band gets an encore, the farmer a stiff pour, and we're all getting closer this time."

Even as her career appears to be on the up and up, Cilker hasn't lost sight of her rural influences, as she tries to bridge the country's increasing rural-urban divide through song.

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As a correspondent on NPR's national desk, Kirk Siegler covers the urban-rural divide in America. A beat exploring the intersection between urban and rural life, culture, and politics,

Airports Gleam After The Pandemic

After more than a decade of traveling by air twice a month, I shut myself down when the pandemic hit. Most of you did the same, according to airport counts. Earlier this month, I took my first trip in almost 2½ years. I visited seven different airports. I can report that most of them gleam like never before.

After two-plus years of greatly reduced use and federal support, every bit of deferred maintenance appears to have been done. For the first time since it mattered, airports had as many electrical outlets as there were travelers who needed them. And they all worked!

Gate attendants and TSA workers appeared rested, well trained and in good spirits. None had that far-away look and bedraggled appearance that comes from overwork. There was a spring in their collective step, a lilt in their intercom announcements. The pandemic has temporarily right-sized air travel for all concerned.

Several airports have switched to larger trays that better fit the x-ray machines, replacing the tubs that must have been repurposed from stockyards for feeding cattle. I even saw a system in place – in Newark, I believe – that automatically conveyed the empty trays back to the start of the line.

I don't claim to be impartial on this matter, but Eugene has even more spit-and-polish than the other airports I saw. Almost every pillar was clad with reminders about Oregon 22. Thousands of track stars and fans will be passing through those hallways this month. Our airport is ready to make a good first impression.

The airport has a new parking policy. The first 30 minutes are now free. This encourages drivers to park their car when

waiting for arriving passengers or lingering for a long good-bye. Fewer motors idling and fewer drivers circling reduces noise and emissions.

It's as if every airline and airport executive was given a sabbatical to renew their spirit and vision, gaining new clarity about the big picture. Eugene's separate pick-up area for Uber and Lyft customers lacks a bench or a pavilion cover from the rain, but I'm ready to believe they've already been ordered.

Inside the terminal, the Eugene Public Library has installed a darling short story dispenser at the top of the escalator. Its colorful display begs travelers to pause for a moment and hit a button for a locally written story, just for their enjoyment. The story is spit out like an overenthusiastic ATM receipt to be read during an idle moment.

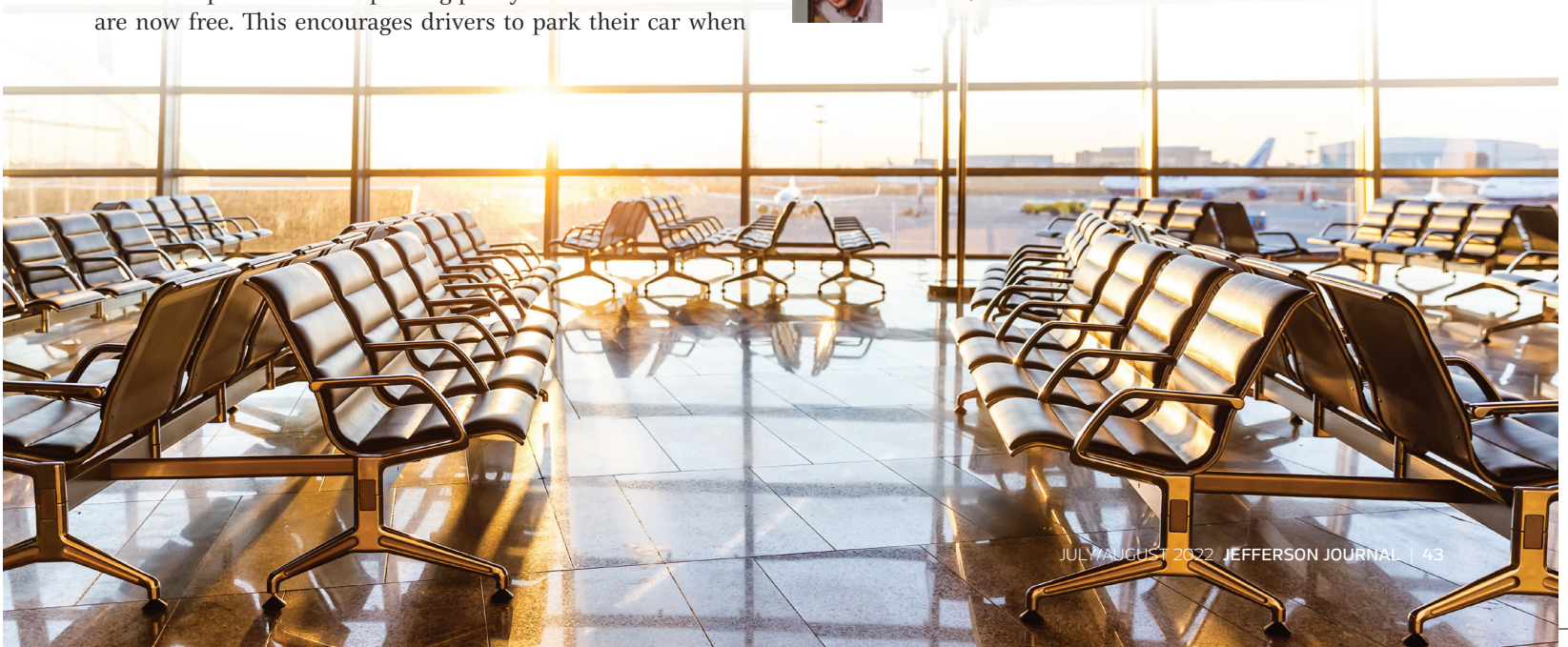
I knew about the machine because library staff asked me to submit an entry, but I was still surprised to see it. I hope the airport staff will test several locations before settling on its permanent home. Airports create a hurry-up-and-wait freneticism. Only near the terminal gates are people reliably reposed.

Finally, the people watching was better than ever. Hesitant but not overwhelmed, grateful to be moving, but glad for fewer people doing the same. The masks made it easier to project my own feelings onto strangers.

Inside the terminal, the Eugene Public Library has installed a darling short story dispenser at the top of the escalator.



Don Kahle (fridays@dksez.com) writes a column each Friday and Sunday for *The Register-Guard* and archives past columns at www.dksez.com.



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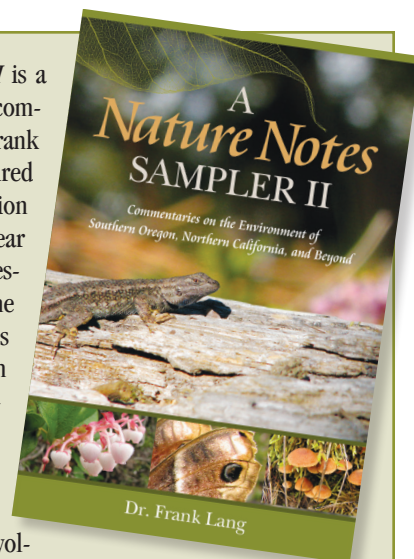
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Shrimp In Poblano Chili And Cilantro Sauce

This recipe is a shrimp version of the classic Mexican fish dish *pescado en salsa poblano*, or fish in poblano sauce. To make the creamy, vibrantly hued sauce that cloaks plump, gently cooked shrimp, poblano chilies, with their earthy flavor and moderate heat, are pureed with cilantro, alliums and Mexican crema, a rich cultured cream similar to but milder than sour cream. If crema isn't available, sour cream works in its place. Serve with warmed tortillas and, if you like, rice and beans.

Don't be afraid to use the cilantro stems. Unlike parsley, cilantro has stems that are tender and will readily break down in the blender.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS | 40 MINUTES

Ingredients

- 2 Tablespoons grapeseed or other neutral oil
- 2 Medium poblano chilies, stemmed, seeded and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 2 Medium garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- ½ Medium white onion, thinly sliced, plus more to serve
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1½ Pounds extra-large (21/25 per pound) shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 Tablespoon lime juice, plus lime wedges to serve
- 3 Cups lightly packed fresh cilantro, plus more to serve
- ⅓ Cup mexican crema or sour cream

Directions

1. In a 12-inch skillet over medium-high, heat the oil until barely smoking. Add the chilies and cook, stirring occasionally, until charred in spots, 2 to 4 minutes. Reduce to medium and add the garlic, onion, ¼ cup water and ½ teaspoon salt. Cover and cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, toss the shrimp with the lime juice, ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper; set aside.
2. Transfer the vegetable mixture to a blender; reserve the skillet. To the blender, add the cilantro, crema and ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Blend on high until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Pour the puree into the skillet and bring to a simmer over medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the shrimp and cook, stirring often, until opaque throughout, about 3 minutes.
4. Off heat, taste and season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving dish and garnish with additional cilantro and sliced onion; serve with lime wedges.

Christopher Kimball's Milk Street in downtown Boston—at 177 Milk Street—is home to the editorial offices and cooking school. It also is where they record *Christopher Kimball's Milk Street* television and radio shows. *Milk Street* is changing how we cook by searching the world for bold, simple recipes and techniques. For more information, go to 177milkstreet.com. You can hear *Milk Street Radio* Sundays at 3:00pm on JPR's *News & Information* service.



POETRY

W. M. SHOCKLEY

Still life

the only daffodils
unaffected by the late
winter
snow drop
—heads pressed to the cold ground—
are those, clipped
three days ago,
standing tall in the vase
on the kitchen
table

Annular eclipse

the dull eye in
the mirror—
a sign of ailing?—
the world is,
for the nonce,
sick.
or is it the moon?
Against that:
the boundless burst of energy
of the big dog—eyes keen—
as she sees me
for the first time
today

on my 71st Birthday

today
I put away
the toys
of boys (that's right, 71)
at long last—
it's been a blast;
the denouement comes on too fast
casting me into adulthood.
Not good. Not good.
Not fun. Not fun.
(that's right, it's 71)

W. M. Shockley recently worked as a radio playwright/director/producer and general factotum for Wycked Fell Radio Theater, and was a radio playwright for Take One Radio Theater on KUCR-FM and Janus Company on KPFK-FM. His novel *Bustout* was nominated for Best Western Novel, and his writing has appeared in *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Pulphouse*, *Tomorrow*, and *Louis L'Amour's Western Magazine*. Father of four, husband of one, old, he lives in Bella Vista, California.

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